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IN THE GOLDEN DAYS

BY

EDNA LYALL

AUTHOR OF

'DONOVAN,' 'WE TWO,' 'TO RIGHT THE WRONG,'
'KNIGHT-ERRANT,' ETC. ETC.

'It is not but the tempest that doth show
The seaman's cunning; but the field that tries
The captain's courage; and we come to know
Best what men are in their worst jeopardies;
For lo, how many have we seen to grow
To high renown, from lowest miseries,
Out of the hands of death, and many a one
T' have been undone, had they not been undone.'
S. DANIEL. 1619.

Nineteenth Edition.

IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON:

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1896.

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ORMSKIRK

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WITH MY LOVE
TO THE KINSFOLK
AT
'MONDISFIELD.'

1855

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IN THE GOLDEN DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

GOOD KING CHARLES'S GOLDEN DAYS.

What stronger breastplate than a heart untainted !
Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked, though locked up in steel,
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.—SHAKESPERE.

‘THAT stripling of yours is too quiet by half, Randolph ! You should shake him up a bit—give him a little of your superfluous energy.’

‘Hugo is but nineteen ; you can hardly expect him to be aught but a raw school-boy.’

Sir Peregrine Blake laughed.

‘School-boy indeed ! as little of a boy as ever I saw. You’ve kept him too close, Randolph, and that’s a fact ! Mewed him up as though he were a convent maid.’

‘He had good schooling at Westminster,’ returned the other ; ‘and if Dr. Busby couldn’t birch him into an ordinary fellow how can I help it ? I’m sure he has had enough thrashings from me alone to harden him !’

‘I’ll warrant that !’ said Sir Peregrine, smiling broadly. ‘You were ever a good hand at keeping other folk in order. For my part, I marvel that your brother is so willing to bow down to you in everything.’

‘Habit, Blake—a mere matter of habit. I’ve brought him up to it, and now begin to reap the reward of my pains. He will be a useful second to me.’

‘Why don’t you get him a commission ? The army is the best cure for your bookish, philosophising youth !’

'He's not fit for active service. Besides, I would rather have him in my own profession.'

"Others believe no voice to an organ
So sweet as lawyer's in his bar-gown,"

trolled Sir Peregrine, quoting from *Hudibras*, the great satire of the times. 'Well, after all, the Bar is the usual thing for younger sons. Have you fairly settled the matter?'

'Quite. He was entered as a student at the Inner Temple six months ago, and already he has taken up with the most jovial and rollicking of the Templars, who will soon stir him up!'

'What, that fellow Denham, who's riding with him now?'

'Ay, the one who was so lucky yesterday at Newmarket. I never knew such a fellow; he was born to win!'

'By my faith! an odd pair of friends!' said Sir Peregrine, laughing. 'Rupert Denham—dare-devil, and Hugo Wharncliffe—passive obedience in the flesh!'

The elder brother frowned a little.

'Passive obedience has its advantages,' he remarked, with some asperity.

And for a few minutes there was a pause in the conversation.

The two were riding along a rough track which in those days—two hundred years ago—was dignified by the name of a road. All around them lay a vast expanse of slightly undulating ground covered with low gorse bushes and heather. Of cultivation no trace was to be seen; wild, open, and utterly waste lay the great stretch of land as far as the eye could reach, without one field reclaimed, or one acre turned to the profit of a nation which yet was often in sore need of bread. That the state of the country was not all that it might have been, did not, however, occur to the two gentlemen as they rode on in silence on that October afternoon of the year 1682. Randolph Wharncliffe had indeed a grievance, but it was a private grievance, and as to troubling himself about the people and the land, or the laws of supply and demand, or the abject condition of the poor, or the responsibility of riches, it would never have entered his head.

He was now a little over forty, a clever, cold-looking man, evidently one who, having set his mind on any object, would pursue it through thick and thin. His features were regular and good, but there was an ominous want of repose in the forehead, while the mouth, plainly visible under the slender

moustache, betrayed a bitter and overbearing temper. He wore the usual long, curled wig of the period, a crimson riding-suit, a short cloak thrown back over one shoulder, and a crimson felt hat cocked on the left side.

His companion, Sir Peregrine Blake, was a few years older in reality, but years had left few traces on his face either for good or evil. He was a bluff, ruddy, hot-tempered country squire, proud of his long pedigree, his ancestral mansion, and his well-stocked deer-park. He was a Suffolk magistrate, and flattered himself that he discharged his duties with great dignity and decorum. Both gentlemen were returning from the autumn races at Newmarket, and Randolph Wharncliffe and his brother were to spend the night under Sir Peregrine's roof on their way back to London.

The rough track had now led down to a broader and more regular thoroughfare, deeply scored, however, with ruts. On each side of the way was a wood, dusky enough to make Randolph draw up his steed sharply, and glance back across the heathy country they had left.

'Those two are loitering,' he said. 'Maybe we had better wait for them. This wood might prove a snug retreat for highwaymen.'

'I don't think it,' said Sir Peregrine. ''Tis not far from the village of Mondisfield, and but half-a-mile from the Hall.'

'Mondisfield!' exclaimed Randolph, in a tone which made his companion look up quickly.

'Ay, Colonel Wharncliffe's place. Why, bless my soul, I never thought of that before! I suppose he's near of kin to you?'

'Thank heaven, no!' said Randolph, bitterly. 'We are very distantly related. But I come into the estate at his death.'

Sir Peregrine uttered half-a-dozen unwritable ejaculations.

'To think that you are akin to that grave, puritanical republican! We'll drink to-night to his speedy dissolution! 'Twould be something like to have you master of Mondisfield Hall.'

'Had the king rewarded his friends instead of pardoning his foes, I should have been in possession these twenty years,' said Randolph, his brow darkening, his lips contracting themselves into a straight line, his eyes gleaming with cold anger.

'Ho, ho!' exclaimed Sir Peregrine. 'Now I see how the land lies! You are one of the many unrequited cavaliers

whose fathers melted the family plate for the Blessed Martyr's use, and lost their broad acres for the privilege of fighting his battles.'

'I care not for what we have lost,' returned the other. 'But I do care that this minion of Cromwell's, this hater of monarchy, should be calmly enjoying all his possessions, while loyal subjects are yet crippled by poverty.'

'You should get the fellow denounced to the king. Catch him using treasonable words, or haunting conventicles. Why, confound it, Randolph! what's the good of your being a lawyer if you can't make out a pretty little case in your own behoof?'

Randolph did not reply. He looked round impatiently towards the other horsemen, who were approaching them as rapidly as the bad roads would permit.

The elder of the two was a merry, careless-looking fellow of three-and-twenty, his whole face seemed to sparkle with humour, and his fantastic dress, covered at every available point with loops and streamers of bright-coloured ribbons, suited his face to a nicety.

The younger, Hugo, was indeed a strange contrast. In those days, such a face could not but challenge observation, it was so curiously unlike the generality of faces. In complexion he was pale and fair. Like the rest of the world, he was clean shaven, save for a very slight moustache; and, unlike the rest of the world, he had not yet adopted the prevalent wig, though it was, as a rule, eagerly coveted even by young boys. He wore his own hair, which was light brown, and somewhat wanting in colour, but made up for its deficiencies in that way by its crisp curliness, and its great thickness and length. The rather large and marked features were well cut, the chin pointed, the mouth singularly sweet-tempered. But the power of the face lay in the forehead, which was strikingly broad and open, and in the large, strangely-shaped, dark-grey eyes. Altogether, it was a face to haunt one—full of interest, because full of possibilities. Apparently there was, however, some truth in Sir Peregrine's strictures. Hugo did, in fact, look as though he needed waking up. He lived in a world of his own, blissfully removed from the coarse and sensual world which surrounded him, but a world too shadowy, too dreamily peaceful to call forth his best faculties.

'What the devil do you mean by keeping me waiting like this?' said Randolph, as his brother rejoined him. 'Ah, I see how it has been!' he continued, catching sight of a harmless-looking bundle of herbs fastened to his saddle-bow. 'You've

been loitering over those wretched specimens of yours. I'll put a stop to it altogether, if you make it such a general nuisance.'

And, with an angry gesture, he reached across, tore off the bunch of herbs, and flung them far away into the copse which bordered the road.

Hugo looked after them with a sort of regret, but not even a gleam of anger dawned in his quiet eyes. He made no excuse for his slowness, neither did he express any concern for having caused his brother to wait for him. He was absolutely, yet not sulkily, silent. It was rather as if some noisy, screaming bird had flown across the surface of a calm lake, thinking to create a vast disturbance, but quite powerless to trouble the deep, still waters.

The small cavalcade rode on.

'Well!' ejaculated Denham, turning a look of utter astonishment upon his companion, 'I'm blessed if I'd have let him do that to me! Why, he's thrown away that weed you were so mighty pleased at finding.'

'Ay,' said Hugo; 'I would I had not put it with the rest. Something must have angered Randolph. Maybe he has had words with Sir Peregrine.'

'If you aren't the meekest of Templars, my name's not Rupert!' exclaimed Denham. 'What right had he to fling away what belonged to you?'

'Right!' ejaculated Hugo. 'Why, it was Randolph! He's my guardian, you know, my brother—everything to me!'

His face became more animated as he spoke, evidently loyalty to his very despotic elder was his most pronounced characteristic. It had never occurred to him not to obey, not to reverence.

Just at this moment Sir Peregrine's horse stumbled, a proceeding which caused that worthy to swear lustily.

'A stone in his shoe, if I'm not mistaken,' said Randolph; then, raising his voice, 'Dismount, Hugo, instantly, and see what is amiss with the beast.'

Hugo flung the reins of his own steed to Denham, and in a moment was making the best of his way through the mud and loose stones to the squire's horse. Sir Peregrine had also dismounted, but he left his horse to Hugo, perhaps not caring to spoil his long riding-gloves, perhaps because he had caught sight of an attraction which he could never resist.

By the roadside, gathering the blackberries which grew on the outskirts of the wood, was a lovely girl; beside her stood

a little child of ten years old holding the large basket already more than half filled with the shining ripe fruit.

Exactly what passed Hugo never knew. He was very unobservant at all times, and now, absorbed in his own thoughts, and busy with the horse, he heard nothing but a hum of meaningless conversation, until a frightened, indignant cry in a girlish voice fell upon his ear and startled him back to the world of realities.

The scene that met his gaze was of too common occurrence to have aroused him under ordinary circumstances. That a pretty girl should be waylaid by a fine gentleman, kissed, complimented, treated with every sort of insulting familiarity, seemed to him, or had seemed until now, inevitable. But then few of the women he knew made any sort of objection to such treatment. This girl objected very strongly.

All his life long Hugo could call up that picture. The background of autumn trees in russet and gold, the broad strip of grass by the roadside, dotted here and there with bramble bushes, the little child with a face of astonishment and horror, and in vivid contrast the red-visaged Squire and the victim of his rude attentions, her blue eyes wide with fright and bright with indignation, her cheeks pale, the short rings of sunny brown hair lightly stirred by the wind and unprotected by the brown hood which had fallen back from her head.

Sir Peregrine, nettled by her resistance, grew more rude and importunate.

‘No, no, no!’ cried the girl. ‘Evelyn! call for help!’

But even as she said the words, she knew that they were useless. Every one was at work gathering apples in the orchard, and the orchard was half-a-mile away.

It was at this moment that Hugo woke up. Had Sir Peregrine guessed what would be the first results of that waking, he would have prudently left his wish unuttered. For all at once, and in a manner which absolutely took away his breath, he was aware of an apparition in Lincoln green which thrust itself between him and the object of his admiration, a pair of strong arms encircled him, an adroit push and jerk came at that one vulnerable point, the back of his knee, and in a trice he was sprawling on his back among the long grass.

‘There! run off while you can!’ said Hugo, rather breathlessly, turning to the rescued maiden. He was evidently well taught in all gymnastic feats, but out of training.

‘Oh,’ she faltered, ‘how shall I thank you enough!’

‘By getting into safety now,’ he said, smiling, and motioning her back from the road.

It was the first time he had ever spoken so decidedly, or assumed such an air of command; he felt altogether a different creature, stronger, freer, but less peaceful—for once in his life, indeed, positively anxious.

Both Randolph and Denham had now dismounted. Denham was trying to conceal his silent convulsions of laughter, while Randolph, with an air of great concern and a crease in his brow which boded ill for Hugo’s future, bent over Sir Peregrine, who was struggling again to his feet.

‘The impudent, meddling puppy!’ he exclaimed, pouring forth a whole volley of oaths. ‘You shall pay dearly for this, sir! I’ll call you out for this, sir!’

Randolph looked not a little discomposed at this announcement. It was quite in accordance with the customs of the times, but somehow he had never contemplated the possibility of a duel for his brother.

‘You would never fight a mere school-boy like that, Blake! I promise you he shall have a sound thrashing to-night for his impudence. Come here, Hugo; apologise to Sir Peregrine at once.’

Hugo moved a few steps forward, but did not utter a word. Denham watched his face curiously. All its dreamy content was gone, all its unquestioning calm dispelled; there had come to him one of those terrible moments which occur in most lives, when suddenly, without the slightest warning, we are called upon to choose between two courses, both painful to us, both apparently evil. Was he now at last to disobey his guardian, or was he to own himself in the wrong when he knew that he had been right? Either decision would, as he was even now dimly aware, involve him in great danger. If he obeyed his brother’s command, his moral being would be degraded. If he disobeyed, his physical being would be in mortal peril; for he was quite well aware that, although by mere ability he might manage to throw Sir Peregrine, he had no chance in an actual duel. But to disobey Randolph, and to do so with nothing but death staring him in the face! The habit of a lifetime was not to be easily broken; the habitually submissive will could not assert itself without a violent and a most painful effort. There was a dead pause, not a sound was to be heard, save the autumn wind sighing among the trees, and the munching of the horses as they grazed by the roadside.

'What do you mean by hesitating like this?' said Randolph, laying a heavy hand upon his shoulder. 'Do as I tell you, apologise at once.'

'I can't apologise,' said Hugo at last, in a quick, agitated voice. 'I am sorry to have had to throw Sir Peregrine, but it was a disagreeable necessity.'

'You meddling, conceited jackanapes, what do you mean by a necessity?' thundered Sir Peregrine, purple with rage.

'Leave him to me, Blake,' interposed Randolph; 'I'll bring him to his senses. Now, look here, Hugo, you know well enough that I never go back from what I've said. I command you to apologise. I am your guardian, and I insist that you shall do your duty and obey me.'

Another pause. Hugo had grown deathly white. At last he spoke with a great effort.

'I obey you in all things, sir; but you must stand second to my conscience.'

'Conscience!'

There was a shout of laughter.

'He'll turn conventicler next,' shouted Sir Peregrine. 'You idiot, don't you know that you are uttering pestilent heresy—substituting your beggarly private judgment for authority?'

'*Will* you obey me?' said Randolph, once more, pressing yet more heavily upon his shoulder, and speaking in a tone which, owing to certain old memories, made the blood curdle in Hugo's veins.

He looked right up into the fierce, grey eyes, however, and answered, firmly—

'No, sir, I will not.'

There was a touch of dignity in his manner which startled Denham. Perhaps it was owing to the entire absence of defiance, the mingled regret and respect of his tone.

'Then go to your destruction!' said Randolph, furiously. 'Blake, I am happy to act as your second. I hope you'll give this impudent rebel a good lesson.'

'No delay, then,' roared Sir Peregrine. 'We'll have it out, now that my blood's up. Come, look sharp, Wharnccliffe!'

'My man has the choice of weapons,' said Denham, stepping forward, and voluntarily taking the part of second to his friend.

Sir Peregrine laughed.

'Let him take it, then, and be quick. Tell him that both my sword and my pistol have seen good service, and have settled better men ere now.'

Denham rejoined Hugo, who had retired a little distance, and delivered the message.

'And you'd best choose swords, old fellow, for Blake is such a confounded good shot, that you'd not stand a chance that way,' he added.

'All right,' said Hugo, mechanically drawing his weapon from its scabbard, and examining its edge.

At that time, a sword was part of the ordinary dress of every gentleman, but Hugo's had at present been ornamental rather than useful. He had grasped the hilt each Sunday when the women curtsied in the Creed, but the action had been purely mechanical. It had never occurred to him that he might one day be called on to defend his faith.

Denham crossed over once more with the decision, then returned. His merry face looked a trifle graver than usual, and his jokes came with a slight effort.

'By heaven! I wish I could go instead of you,' he said. 'That hot-tempered squire is as strong as an ox, and a practised hand, while you——!'

He broke off, and glanced at his companion, who had thrown aside his riding-cloak and doublet, and now stood, straight and slim, in a close-fitting vest of dark-green cloth, loose breeches, and crimson stockings, his ample white shirt-sleeves tied at the wrist with bunches of crimson ribbon. He seemed ridiculously young, and most obviously unequal to his challenger, more fit to be quietly poring over books in some library than preparing for a duel.

'Look here, old fellow,' said Denham, forcing a little merriment into his voice, which he was far from feeling, 'you must pluck up heart of grace! If you go in as spiritless as you are now, you'll be a dead man in five minutes—and then you'll be bodiless, which will be worse. Come, cheer up. Think you are going to kill him.'

Hugo shuddered at the idea.

'Good Lord! what a thing it is to have an imagination! Now, I can go in for a duel and enjoy it. Why can't you expect the best for once?'

'I'm not sure which is the best,' said Hugo, reflectively. 'However'—smiling a little—'it's waste of time to think of it. Of course he's more than a match for me. Seems odd to have been born and bred for this—to throw away one's life in a dispute. A waste of good material! Though Mr. Newton says there's no waste in Nature.'

'Was there ever such a fellow!' exclaimed Denham, almost

ready to shake him, and yet feeling all the time a curious sense of awe. 'He's already begun to picture himself as worms'-meat! Thank heaven, I'm a practical man, and not a visionary! Can't you get up even a spice of anger to warm you?'

Hugo shook his head.

'Sir Peregrine has anger enough for the two of us,' he said, with a touch of humour in his tone. 'I did feel angry when the girl cried, but that's all over now. There! time's up. We must come. Thanks, Denham, for your help.'

They walked a few paces in silence, Hugo's eyes involuntarily turned not to his antagonist but to his brother. He looked at him for a moment keenly, then turned to Denham with a sigh.

'If only Randolph had not deserted me!' he said wistfully, 'I should care very little for the rest.'

The seconds spoke a few words to each other, and led the way to the smoothest bit of turf at hand. Hugo followed in a dull, mechanical way. Whether it were cowardly or no, he could not candidly own that he felt anything but heavy-hearted.

To be compelled to lay down his life by the barbarous custom of the time, was not to him a very inspiring thing.

Never before had the world seemed so beautiful to him, never had the mere joy of existence thrilled through him as it did now. He took one long, searching glance all around. Good-bye to the blue skies with their fleecy white cloudlets, good-bye to the autumn woods, good-bye to beautiful Nature, of whom he knew so little and wanted to know so much! A familiar whinnying sound reminded him of his favourite horse; he turned quickly, and seeing that Sir Peregrine was not quite ready, he walked to the woodside where the animal was fastened up to a silver-birch tree. Just once more he would speak to his old friend.

All at once as he caressed the steed he became aware that at no great distance, crouched down among the thick bramble-bushes within the wood, there yet lurked the pretty girl and her little sister, the innocent cause of all his trouble.

'Joyce! Joyce!' he heard the little one exclaim, in a loud whisper. 'Look there!'

And then for a minute the sunny brown head was lifted, and he caught a vision of a lovely, tear-stained face, of innocent blue eyes, which met his fully, eyes which were as the windows from out of which a pure soul looked forth.

‘Mr. Dryden would call them watchet blue!’ he reflected; and then all at once there rushed tumultuously into his mind the thought that those same blue eyes would watch the duel, would perhaps sadden were he to fall in her cause, would even perchance weep for him.

What a curse, what a shadow to fall upon so young and pure a life, thus innocently to have caused the death of a stranger! What if he could after all vanquish Sir Peregrine? Fight so well as to win the admiration of sweet, blue-eyed Joyce?

Wonderful vision of a child-like face! Wonderful manhood touched into life by the first appeal to its protective power!

He turned away and walked briskly across the turf to the appointed place; his heart beat high with hope, a steady, quiet determination took possession of him. What if he *were* fighting against great odds? Men had so fought before now and had conquered! In any case he would do his best. For a moment his heart failed a little as he glanced at his brother. Well, he must try to dismiss that cold, stern, unsympathising face from his thoughts, he must think only of the sweet, anxious face that would be watching him from the wood.

Sir Peregrine was ready; each combatant drew his sword, standing there face to face each took the measure, as it were, of his antagonist. In truth they were a strange contrast. Sir Peregrine a man of great strength, short, thick-set, bull-necked, a splendid type of an English squire of the times, and a man who had fought at least a dozen duels. Hugo, tall, slight, delicate, with much more of the student than the duellist about him. In one respect only had he the advantage. Sir Peregrine was still in a towering passion, his red face was many degrees redder than usual, his eyes seemed all ablaze. Hugo, on the other hand, looked perfectly calm and self-possessed. It was a calm far removed from the dreamy indifference, the philosophic serenity which had hitherto characterised him, the calm of a strong resolve, full of power and dignity because concerned rather with the welfare of others than with its own fate.

Then in that quiet country-side, amid the soft sighing of the autumn wind, and the faint rustle of the yellow leaves as they fell to their last resting-place, and the singing of the robins, and the quiet munching of the horses, there rose another sound, the sound of the clashing of swords. In the wood little Evelyn hid her face and trembled, but Joyce dried

her tears and watched eagerly, anxiously. It was frightful, and yet it fascinated her. Would her 'brave knight,' as she called him, conquer that horrible man who had tormented her? Alas, he was in comparison to him but as a reed to a sturdy oak; that he should conquer seemed barely possible. Joyce had, however, a firm belief in poetic justice; she watched hopefully.

Fast and hard came those fearful thrusts; Hugo, who at present was acting purely on the defensive, parried them adroitly. So far all was well. The only question was how long his strength would hold out. He was well-taught, quick, agile, and acquainted with a few modern devices of which the squire was ignorant, but there was no denying that they were very ill-matched. Twice, when for a minute they each retired a few paces, Joyce noticed that her champion, in spite of the warmth of the struggle, was growing ominously pale, and when for the third time they paused for a moment's rest, she could hear even at that distance how he was gasping for breath, could see how he leant for support against his second, who encouraged him with words of warm praise.

But Joyce was so much taken up with watching her 'knight' that she did not notice very critically the condition of his opponent. Sir Peregrine had grown not pale but purple, he was beside himself with rage, could scarcely see clearly. Once more the two closed in deadly combat. The level rays of the afternoon sun glinted on the flashing blades, and lit up Hugo's white, set face; exhausted, almost fainting, he yet struggled on. But to act on the defensive against such a foe as Sir Peregrine needed all his faculties at their very best. A violent thrust in an unexpected quarter very nearly proved his ruin, he managed partly to avert the blow, but was conscious even at the moment that with a wound in his sword-arm he could not hold out much longer. Sir Peregrine with an uncontrollable shout of triumph struck wildly. Joyce sobbed aloud, but dashed the tears from her eyes that she might see what befell.

Ah, what was this? Blood was dropping slowly to the ground from her champion's right arm; but he had seized his sword in his left hand, parried Sir Peregrine's blow, taken the squire utterly by surprise, and with the strength of despair, made one more desperate thrust. Sir Peregrine's sword wavered for an instant. Joyce could look no longer, actually to see which sword would enter which body was more than

she could endure. A moment which seemed to her like eternity, then a fearful oath ringing out into the still air, and a crash as of some one falling heavily on the turf. She looked up in an agony. Both the seconds were bending over a prostrate form; close by there stood—there stood—oh! why did this horrible mist come before her eyes and blind her!—yes, it was indeed her ‘brave knight.’ He stood gravely watching his vanquished foe for a minute; then, as if a thought had suddenly occurred to him, he made his way from the smooth bit of turf into the wood, as though searching for something. Very unsteady were his steps. Joyce watched them anxiously. Ah, yes! it was as she had expected. He had sunk down exhausted among the thick brushwood.

‘Come, Evelyn, come!’ she exclaimed. ‘He is hurt, wounded!’

Shyly and yet unhesitatingly she made her way through the tangled undergrowth of the wood; shyly, but yet with gentle graciousness, she stooped over him.

‘Sir, I am afraid you are hurt,’ she said. ‘Can we help you in anything?’

Hugo looked up, and saw the sweet, pure face looking down on him. It would have been like heaven just to realise that he was still alive and still near to those ‘watchet eyes,’ could he only have freed himself from the recollection of the man whom he had wounded—perhaps mortally.

‘I was looking for water,’ he said, faintly. ‘I thought I heard a brook hard by.’

‘Yes, our brook is near,’ she replied. ‘Run, Evelyn, quickly; fetch some water in your hat.’

The little child ran away as fast as her legs would carry her, snatching off her large straw hat as she went.

‘Your arm is hurt,’ said Joyce, clasping his wrist with one of her soft little hands, and with the other gently untying the crimson ribbon which secured his shirt-sleeve.

‘It is not much,’ said Hugo; ‘a mere scratch.’

But he could make no objection to having it examined; it was so sweet to be treated as though he belonged to her, as indeed, by right of her womanhood and his wound, he did for the time.

‘Ah, what a pity Elizabeth is not here!’ ejaculated Joyce, when the dripping shirt-sleeve had been turned up and the wound exposed.

Hugo did not re-echo the sentiment.

'Why?' he asked, smiling a little.

'Because Elizabeth is so clever, and she says my fingers are all thumbs,' said Joyce, humbly. 'But indeed I think I can tie it up rightly, if you'll trust me.'

'With my life,' said Hugo.

She took his handkerchief and tied it tightly below the wound, then she took her own and bound it securely round the arm from wrist to elbow, producing a funny little housewife from her hanging pocket, out of which, after a minute's search, there emerged needle and thread. With these she elaborately stitched up her bandage.

Before it was quite finished, Evelyn returned with the high-crowned hat full of water.

'There!' she said, triumphantly, holding it to his lips. 'Scarcely any is lost.'

'Not for me,' he said, still rather breathlessly; 'twas for Sir Peregrine. Oh, do you think you could carry it to him? He's past doing any harm now.'

It was impossible to refuse his request, but Evelyn thought she could exactly sympathise with King David's followers when, after they had taken so much trouble to fetch him the water, he poured it all out on the ground. It was hard that he should send it away, not using a single drop. She went off, however, obediently, not much liking her errand, but setting about it bravely, nevertheless.

'But I shall carry off your handkerchief,' said Hugo. 'Will you spare it me as a keepsake?'

'Tis a very poor one,' said Joyce, 'for you who have done so much for me. And I fear that the wound will be a disagreeable reminder for a long time.'

'It can't be disagreeable if it serves to remind me of you,' said Hugo. 'There! we will exchange tokens;' and he placed in her hand the crimson ribbon which had tied his wristband. 'Do you know that in Queen Elizabeth's days the court ladies used to give their friends little handkerchiefs as keepsakes, and the men used to wear them in their hats?'

'No, I never heard that. Do they do that at court now?'

'No, not now.'

'Have you been to the court?'

'Oh, many a time.'

'How I should like to see it!' said Joyce, with a child's eager curiosity. 'Is it very, *very* fine?'

'Very fine; but I would not have you there for the world.'

'Why not?'

'Because it never could be a fit place for you. You are good, you see.'

'Good! Why, no,' said Joyce, opening her eyes wide; 'I am not good at all, not even when I try. Damaris says she fears I'm not in a state of grace.'

'I am sure you are!' said Hugo, smiling.

'I don't know,' said Joyce, with a sigh; 'for I never quite understand what it means. But I do hope I'm one of the elect, don't you?'

'I never thought about it particularly,' said Hugo, much amused. 'But I've no objection, if they're a nice set of people!'

Joyce looked so amazed at this daring reply that he half wished he had not made it. At that moment, however, Evelyn returned, having run a second time to the brook to refill her hat.

'That is good of you!' said Hugo, drinking thirstily. 'How is Sir Peregrine?'

'Is that the wounded one?' asked Evelyn. 'They have helped him on to his horse, and will take him to Mondistfield, to the inn.'

'Did he speak?'

'Oh, yes,' replied the child; 'but a good deal of it I couldn't understand. I heard him say, though, that he would be right enough with a few days' rest, and that he had never expected the young devil to get the better of him. Is the devil young, though? I always thought he was as old as old can be.'

Hugo laughed aloud; even Joyce smiled.

Ah, how sweet it was to rest there in the quiet wood, listening to the talk of those two innocent, fresh, country girls! Should he ever again see any one so pure, so good, so amusingly unsophisticated? What a gulf lay between their world and his! Why, they barely understood each other's languages! With a sigh, he struggled to his feet.

'I must not trouble you longer,' he said. 'Good-bye; don't quite forget me.'

'We could never do that,' said Joyce, blushing; 'and we do thank you, sir, for your help.'

He did not say another word, but just raised her hand to his lips, waved a farewell to little Evelyn, and made his way back to the road.

Sir Peregrine and Randolph had disappeared. His own horse was still tied to the silver-birch tree. Denham had

apparently gone back for something, for he was just now appearing round a curve in the Newmarket road. The only traces of the eventful afternoon lay in the trodden and blood-stained grass by the wayside. He had but just mounted when Denham rode up.

'Where in the wide world have you been all this time?' he exclaimed. 'I've been hunting high and low for you. Ah! I see. The fair lady has been bandaging her champion's wounds. How now, old fellow! Are you properly and desperately in love? The fair one was——'

'Spare your jests for once, Denham, there's a good fellow. How is Sir Peregrine?'

'Oh, the old sinner will do well enough. He was so astonished at being worsted that he's quite forgiven you—sang your praises between his groans. You should have heard him, 'twould have melted even your heart of stone.'

Hugo smiled.

'I'm glad he's all right,' he remarked, with a look of relief.

'Yes; I knew you would have gone into eternal mourning if he'd given up the ghost,' remarked Denham. 'You're too good for this wicked world, mine Hugo.'

Hugo raised his eyebrows, remembering what he had felt like beside Joyce. He made no reply, however, and just at that moment there came a sound of running feet. He glanced round and reined in his horse. Evelyn came up panting.

'Oh,' she said, in her childish, treble voice, ''tis only that I just brought you two of our apples; they are the biggest king-pippins, very sweet ones.'

CHAPTER II.

MONDISFIELD HALL.

These days are dangerous;
Virtue is choked by foul ambition,
And charity chased hence by rancour's hand.
Foul subornation is predominant,
And equity exiled your Highness' land.—SHAKESPEARE.

'DID he take them, Evelyn?' asked Joyce, when the last glimpse of the two horsemen had been hidden by a bend in the road.

‘Yes, and seemed pleased,’ said Evelyn. ‘There was such a funny man with him who called me a cherub. I thought cherubs were in heaven and devils in hell. They seem to mix us all up.’

‘We must come home,’ said Joyce, ‘and tell them all about it. I hope mother won’t be vexed; I think it was no fault of ours. Let us come by the road.’

They picked up the almost forgotten basket of blackberries and walked briskly on for about half-a-mile, taking the same direction followed by the horsemen. The road lay now between enclosed fields—fields which belonged to Joyce’s father. Presently they reached the park gate; Joyce closed it behind them with a feeling of relief and protection which she had never before known, and in silence the two girls made their way up a smooth, well-kept drive. Cattle were grazing in the broad, grassy avenue sheltered by the stately elm-trees; everything looked orderly, peaceful, and home like. They crossed the deep moat surrounding the house by a drawbridge which, since the close of the civil war, had been allowed to remain perpetually down, and over which grew a tangled mass of ivy and creepers, then passed on between two smooth grass-plots, the larger of which was used for a bowling-green, making their way as fast as might be towards the dear home which, though she had always loved it, had never before seemed to Joyce so welcome.

It was a large, three-storied house washed a sort of salmon colour, which was relieved by beams of dark-coloured wood, and by a dark-tiled roof. There it stood, and there it had stood since the reign of Edward III., though how far the original house resembled the present it was hard to say, since there had been many restorations, almost amounting perhaps, in the long run, to rebuilding.

‘Mother will be in the south parlour,’ said Joyce. ‘Let us come there first, Evelyn. Mother will not be hard on us, I am sure, and Elizabeth, you know, might be shocked.’

As she spoke she opened the heavy front door, which led into a flagged passage, divided by a wooden screen from the large, old-fashioned dining-hall on the right hand, while upon the left folding-doors led to the kitchen and offices. At the other extreme of the passage facing the front door lay the back entrance leading into the pleasance, and close to this was the door of the south parlour, the cosiest room in all the house. Here in the morning Colonel Wharncliffe read and wrote, while the mother was seeing well to the ways of her household,

like the good wife in the Proverbs. Here in the afternoon Mrs. Wharnccliffe was always to be found sitting with her needle-work, and always with ample leisure to hear every one's troubles, or to give counsel in some perplexing matter which had been of too great moment to be decided by the elder girls. Here in the evening the father and mother sat together, Colonel Wharnccliffe being too much of a recluse to be able to bear the company of all six children at once, liking them better by instalments, or better still singly, when he could teach them or talk to them at his leisure.

Very peaceful and homelike did the room look to Joyce that afternoon, with its panelled walls and shining polished floor, its square table covered with the new Turkey carpet, which in those days was considered far too good to tread upon, and its stately high-backed chairs. In the window-seat, a large work-basket open before her, sat Mrs. Wharnccliffe. She looked up with a smile as the two girls entered, but put her finger to her lips with a warning 'Hush,' for her husband was reading the news-letter aloud. Written in London some time ago, it had just arrived at Mondisfield Hall, having been read and re-read by at least half-a-dozen households. It was their nearest approach to a newspaper in those rural districts, and its arrival—which was usually on a Wednesday, but varied much according to the punctuality of the various families who passed it on, and to the state of the weather—was in that quiet household a great event.

Evelyn ran up to her mother and nestled down by her side, Joyce stood beside her father listening to the epitome of the week's news. It somehow interested her less than usual. She could not feel any very great concern on hearing of the comet which had been observed near Cancer, and which probably foreboded grave evils to the state. She did not care about the progress of the new Royal Hospital which was being built at Chelsea. Even when the letter went on to describe how the king and his court were amusing themselves at Newmarket, a place not more than ten miles from Mondisfield, she failed to show the eager curiosity which might have been expected from her. Somewhat lifelessly the words fell on her ears.

'His majesty has been well entertained with musick. The Bury men, the Cambridge men, and the Thetford men, have all had the honour of performing before the king, coming in their cloaks and liveries very formally. His majesty highly commended them, and bestowed upon each company the sum of two guineas. Her majesty the queen has consented to witness

the performance of a wonderful mare, the property of one of the officers. This marvellous beast will walk on three legs, will pick up a glove in its mouth and give it to its master while he is upon its back, will feign death, and perform diverse other feats of skill. The king amuses himself much with hawking. The weather has been fine. We learn that Sir George Jeffreys has been sent down to Chester to inquire into the truth of the late riot in favour of the Duke of Monmouth. The Duke of Monmouth has, in consequence of this riot, been forbidden to go to Whitehall or St. James's. Many of the Whigs are extremely indignant that while their meetings are prohibited as "Seditious" (notably the great Whig banquet which was to have been holden on the 21st of April in this year, which, as our readers will remember, was not permitted to take place, constables being at their posts, and even the militia under arms to give due force to the prohibition), yet the Tory meetings are all connived at. The influence of the Duke of York increaseth daily.'

'Does a comet tell troubles coming, father?' asked little Evelyn.

'It does not need a comet, my child, to foretell trouble to this nation,' replied Colonel Wharncliffe. 'God only knows what the end of it all will be.'

'We have something to tell you, mother,' said Joyce a little tremulously; and then helped out by Evelyn she told faithfully all that had happened to them that afternoon. Both parents were more concerned than they cared to appear, but they thought it expedient not to make too much of it before Joyce.

'Probably they were a set of gallants coming back from Newmarket,' said Colonel Wharncliffe. 'It must have given you a sad fright, my little Joy. Don't go outside the grounds again without either Tabitha or some of your sisters.'

'I think they must have been courtiers,' said Joyce. 'At least our knight said he had been to the court often.'

'Any gentleman can go to the court,—he need not necessarily be a courtier. What did he say to you about it?'

'I asked him what it was like, and he said that he wouldn't have me there for the world,—I think because it was a wicked place. Is it wicked, father?'

'A hell on earth!' said Colonel Wharncliffe, speaking so much more vehemently than usual that Joyce was almost frightened. 'A hell on earth, my child! I would sooner see you in your coffin than at Whitehall.'

‘Did you hear the names of any of the gentlemen?’ asked Mrs. Wharncliffe.

‘Only of the bad one who was conquered; he was Sir Peregrine—we didn’t hear his surname. They were going to take him to the “White Horse.”’

‘Well, do not trouble your little heads any more about them. Only remember not to go alone again into the lanes.’

‘Oh, dear!’ sighed Evelyn. ‘And the very best blackberries do grow there. What a sad pity, Joyce, that your face is so very pretty, and that the bad man told you so.’

Colonel Wharncliffe stroked his moustache to hide a smile.

‘Is my face pretty, father?’ asked Joyce, lifting her blue eyes to his in grave and earnest inquiry.

It was against all his principles to tell her the truth in this case.

‘That, my little Joy, is a matter you need not trouble yourself about,’ he said. ‘Run and look in the last chapter of the Proverbs, and see what King Solomon said about beauty.’

Joyce went without another word, flew through the long hall to the north parlour, the room which was used as the general family sitting-room, and, disregarding her sisters, ran up to a small book-case and took down the family Bible. Ah! here was the verse: ‘Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.’

Did that answer her question? She went and stood in front of a sloping glass which hung between the two windows, and looked at herself critically. She knew that if it had been a picture instead of a reflection, she should have thought it rather nice. And yet the Bible said that ‘beauty’ was ‘vain.’

‘Elizabeth,’ she said, half turning round, ‘what does vain mean?’

‘Looking in the glass,’ said Robina, the youngest but one, unable to resist the temptation of turning the laugh against Joyce.

‘I mean here,’ said Joyce, colouring and showing the words to her eldest sister.

Elizabeth read them and thought for a minute.

‘I can tell you,’ interposed Damaris, a tall, pretty-looking girl of nineteen. ‘It comes from the Latin *vanus*—empty. Now, Betty, allow that there is some good in learning Latin.’

‘How can it be empty?’ said Joyce, looking puzzled.

‘I suppose,’ said wise Elizabeth, with that slow sure judgment of hers which made her the referee of the family—‘I

suppose it means that beauty is only like the shell of a thing, and, if it is empty, is of little worth. I suppose it ought to be just the outside covering of all that is really good.'

Joyce sighed. It seemed to her that everything harped round to that one theme, that one supreme difficulty—being good. And she was not good, though her knight had thought her so.

'Shells don't get full of water by lying on the beach and thinking how empty they are,' said Frances, the third sister, looking up from her embroidery. 'They must let the great sea rush over them.'

Frances had a way of saying things in parables which always appealed to Joyce's ready imagination; she went up to her room thinking.

'Shall you send down to the "White Horse"?' said Mrs. Wharncliffe to her husband, when the children had left the south parlour. 'I should like to know who these gentlemen are.'

'The mischief-maker must be Sir Peregrine Blake,' replied her husband. 'I recognised him at once from the child's description.'

'What, Sir Peregrine Blake, the magistrate?'

'Ay, more shame to him. He's a bad man, and a dangerous neighbour for me. I'm thankful there are a dozen miles between the houses.'

'That youth must have been a noble fellow. I should like to know who he is.'

'Yes, 'tis no light thing for one moving in such a set to own to keeping a conscience. He must expect hard times. I would gladly go myself and see him, ay, and thank him heartily; but to-night I dare not risk it. I expect Ferguson, and two others.'

'Will they stop here?' asked his wife.

'No, they will ride over quite late. I shall admit them myself, and they will all be gone again before the household is astir. The servants must not know anything of it, I can't trust their tongues.'

'Is there indeed need of all this secrecy?'

'The utmost need. Even the quietest meeting of friends to discuss the future of this unhappy nation, may be counted treasonable in these days. Were any of my enemies to get wind of it I might be in great peril. To such a pass has "Free England" come!'

He sighed heavily.

‘But can you do any good by these discussions?’ said his wife.

‘Who can say!’ he replied, mournfully. ‘But so long as the people are denied their rightful share in the government of the country, so long will there be private conferences between those who love justice and hate despotism.’

‘But you would not lend yourself to any rising in favour of the Duke of Monmouth?’

‘In the present state of affairs, certainly not,’ he replied. ‘Insurrection is only justifiable when there is a fair chance of success, and of that, at present, there is none. The people at large have not yet perceived how fast the king is robbing them of their liberties.’

‘But this Mr. Ferguson they say is much with the Duke of Monmouth. Is it well to have him coming here?’

‘I have no great liking for him,’ replied Colonel Wharncliffe. ‘He is one who loves intrigue for its own sake. But he is everywhere and in everything, and is a bold purveyor of news. You see, dear heart, living in this quiet countryside, one needs a better and more trustworthy news-bringer than such letters as these.’ He indicated the news-letter which he had just read.

‘Not content with so full an account as that!’ exclaimed his wife.

‘Dear heart!’ he said, smiling, ‘I have a vision of what a free press in a free country will some day prove, and as yet I can be by no means content. ’Tis by the discontent of the few that the many are at last awakened, you know.’

She sighed. If only this discontent, this noble discontent, did not lead him into danger! But the times were evil, and she knew that both his religious and his political views rendered him an object of dislike and suspicion to the dominant party.

CHAPTER III.

OVERLOOKED.

If thou ask me why, sufficeth, my reasons
Are both good and weighty,—*Taming of the Shrew.*

‘UNDERSTAND once for all, that I expect implicit obedience, and, what is more to the point, that I will have it. You have behaved like an unruly child, and I shall treat you as such!’

Hugo did not notice the astonished face of the landlady of the 'White Horse,' as they passed her on the stairs, nor the terrified look of the country girl who showed them which room was vacant. It did not occur to him that other people could possibly be frightened by the violent manner and the harsh voice to which he had from his childhood been accustomed. Randolph was extremely angry. He regretted it, was troubled by it. It pained him to have annoyed his brother, whom he worshipped to a degree almost inconceivable, considering the way in which he was treated by him. But then, had he not expected this all along? Had he not known quite well what the manner of his greeting would be? He accepted it as inevitable, and, indeed, was so well prepared for the violent push which hastened his entrance, that instead of measuring his length on the floor of the bedroom, he merely entered somewhat quickly, having calculated the precise moment when passive resistance, concentrated in his shoulders, would avail him.

The door was sharply closed, and locked from the outside, which, as Hugo was quite well aware, meant for him a dismal evening, without lights or supper. It was certainly a little ignominious, a tame ending to the day on which he had fought his first duel, and worsted a Suffolk magistrate old enough to be his father. But then Hugo did not at present keenly feel humiliations of this sort; he was too quiet, too much wanting in self-assertion, too slow to think of his own rights, too ready to acquiesce in the stronger will which had hitherto, whether for good or for evil, ruled him with a rod of iron. Resistance would have been a trouble—had been a grievous trouble that day. And Hugo loved peace of all things, hated strife and contention, hated any kind of noise; he would have liked to please all parties, or, still better, to be left in unmolested quiet with books instead of people.

To-day, however, a strange and unforeseen disturbance had occurred in the even tenor of his quiet existence; whether he could ever again settle down to the old, peaceful, yielding indifference was a question.

With characteristic coolness, he proceeded to examine his temporary prison with a view to making the most of its advantages. It was a good-sized room; the floor was clean and well scrubbed, the oaken chairs were good of their kind; the four-post bed was hung with gay, red curtains, while the walls were covered with tapestry, representing scenes from Scripture history. On the whole, the room was a good deal more com-

fortable than his own gloomy little chamber in the Temple. It had not been used lately, however, and was stuffy in the extreme. He crossed over to the casement-window, and flung it open, pausing to take a look at the village. Mondisfield was a fairly large parish, but the houses were scattered, and there was nothing that could be called a village-street. The inn seemed an extraordinarily good one for such a place. But in those days English inns were celebrated, and did their best to make up for the badness of the roads and the discomforts of slow travelling. Exactly opposite stood the church, with its square, grey tower, while the cows grazing in an adjoining field all stood with their heads turned towards the setting sun, which threw a ruddy glow over the peaceful scene.

‘Twill soon be dark,’ reflected philosophic Hugo. ‘I may as well read while I can.’

And, taking a small book from his pocket, he stretched himself comfortably on the window-seat, and was soon oblivious of all around him.

The room was growing dusk, and the evening air blew in coldly. Hugo read peacefully on, however, until a handful of gravel was flung against the window, some of which fell right in and alighted upon his book.

‘Denham,’ he said to himself. ‘I might have known he would come.’

He sprang up and looked out.

There stood his merry-faced companion.

‘I’ve been trying to find you this half-hour!’ he exclaimed, ‘but your brother would stand ranting by the window down below. They’ve drawn the curtain, and put up the shutter now, so all’s safe.’

‘How is Sir Peregrine?’ asked Hugo.

‘Oh, well enough. There isn’t a leech to be found nearer than St. Edmondsbury, so he’ll have to bide his time. Don’t trouble your foolish pate about him—letting blood is the best cure for a hot temper. Look here! I forgot to give you your precious herbs. Catch!’

And, so saying, he threw up the bundle of specimens which Randolph had snatched from the saddle-bow that afternoon.

‘How in the name of fortune did you get them?’ exclaimed Hugo, looking much pleased.

‘Went back while your lady-love was bandaging your wound, and, looking for you, lighted by chance upon these. Aren’t you hungry?’

Hugo nodded. 'I didn't know duelling would be such appetising work.'

'There's a glorious dish of eggs and bacon making ready; do you think I could pitch it up to you?'

'No,' said Hugo, laughing. 'And I wish you'd go, Rupert; Randolph would be furious if he caught you.'

'That for Randolph!' said Denham, with a contemptuous snap of the fingers. 'Shan't I throw you up some bread?'

'No, no; I shall do well enough. I'm dog tired, and shall go to sleep. There, I shut up shop, you see! Good-night!' and, suiting the action to the words, he closed the casement, and soon had the satisfaction of hearing the incautious Denham return to the inn parlour.

It was something to have regained his specimens, though it was too dark to do anything with them now. What a pity Denham had reminded him how hungry he was! And why should the smell of a savoury supper in preparation rouse such uncomfortable cravings in one's inner man? True, he had tasted nothing since they had left Newmarket, and had since then gone through much. Ah, by the bye, he had at any rate little Evelyn's king-pippins. Having devoured these hungrily enough, he made his preparations for the night, then, in the gathering gloom, knelt reverently while reciting the Lord's Prayer at a pace which was truly surprising. This was a ceremony which nothing would have induced him to give up; it did not convey very much to him, and yet the mere physical act did in a vague way meet a scarcely conscious demand for worship in his heart.

Just as he was falling asleep, a question flashed across his mind. Would the good Sir Hugo, his ancestor and ideal, have approved his conduct that afternoon? This brave German knight had from his very childhood been his hero; he felt it a sort of responsibility to have been actually named after him, and rejoiced that his father had not modernised him into Hugh. To be in ever so slight a degree like this ancestor had always been his ambition. How would he have reconciled the conflicting duties of obedience and honesty? Would he have obeyed the lawful authority or the inner voice?

Meanwhile, in the room below, Randolph and Denham were making a hearty meal. Neither the thought of Sir Peregrine groaning in the best bed-chamber, nor the recollection of Hugo supperless and weary, could in the least interfere with their hearty enjoyment of the excellent supper provided by the smiling landlady. Nor was Denham at all anxious to quarrel with

his companion, though he thought his treatment of Hugo unjust in the extreme.

Rather he sought to make him enjoy himself, hoping to improve his temper, and to render some service to his friend in this way. It was Randolph himself who first mentioned the duel.

‘I confess,’ he said at length, ‘that, apart from his disobedience, which I shall not readily pardon, I don’t altogether regret what happened. Hugo showed himself more of a man than I expected. It has done him a world of good to be with you.’

Denham laughed and shrugged his shoulders.

‘It’s a case of a prophet in his own country,’ he said, refilling his huge tankard with the excellent home-brewed ale. ‘Now if you were to ask my people, they would say that Hugo was more likely to better me than I to better him.’

‘Opinions differ,’ said Randolph, dryly. ‘With all due deference to Sir William Denham, I am not anxious that Hugo should turn into a scientific hermit. That sort of thing is well enough when a man’s past fifty. But I’ve other views for the boy; I wish him to make his way at court.’

‘I’ll lay you any wager you like that he’ll never do it,’ said Denham. ‘For all his fine voice and his handsome face, there’s that in him which will never do for Whitehall.’

‘How can you tell what’s in him? Why, we none of us thought it was in him to act as he acted to-day—he who was ever one to give the wall and take the gutter.’

‘Well, you ought to know him better than I; but for all that, I’ll bet you a hundred to one that you’ll prove wrong, and I shall prove right. Come, will you take it? We’ll sup together after the next autumn races, and see what the year has brought forth.’

‘Agreed,’ said Randolph. ‘But you must in no way influence him against my wishes.’

‘Certainly not; I would far rather see him high in the king’s favour. ’Tis always well to have a friend at court, and, as you say, it is a shame that with his talents he should not make his way in the world.’

As he spoke the door opened, and the landlord of the ‘White Horse’ ushered in a traveller who had just arrived.

‘They will shoe the horse, sir, as quickly as may be; but it is already late, the roads will be dangerous, and, if your honour will stay the night, you shall have every comfort.’

‘I tell you I can’t stay the night,’ said the new-comer, in a harsh and most unprepossessing voice. ‘I’ve other things to do than to sit by inn fires drinking ale, I can tell you.’

There was a mixture of contempt and boastfulness in his tone and manner which angered the landlord. He was determined to press his hospitalities no further, and abruptly left the room, giving the blacksmith a private hint he need not hurry himself over the traveller’s horse, for he was the sourest cur that had ever darkened his doors. Left to shift for himself, the new guest approached the fire of which he had spoken so disdainfully, bowed stiffly to the two gentlemen, and remarked that it was a cold evening.

Denham, ever ready to talk, endeavoured to draw him into the conversation ; but the stranger seemed not at all anxious to cultivate their acquaintance, and before long produced a shagreen pocket-book, in the contents of which he appeared to become absorbed.

Randolph watched him furtively, yet keenly. Surely it was a face he knew ! Ruddy and ill-favoured, with lantern jaws and restless, curious eyes, a face which for its very hideousness lingered in one’s memory. It was clever, undoubtedly, and bold ; but the boldness bordered on rashness, and the cleverness was overshadowed by the owner’s intense self-consciousness and air of importance. Who in the world could he be ? And where had they met ? Ah ! at last he remembered. He had never met the fellow, but he had read such a graphic description of him that not to recognise him would have been impossible. He was Ferguson the Presbyterian, the mysterious man who was mixed up with all kinds of conspiracies, who was always suspected of being involved in half-a-dozen plots, whose personality was known to every one, and who always managed, by extraordinary good fortune, to be at large. It was currently reported that he bore a charmed life, and indeed his hairbreadth escapes were often almost miraculous. Where could he be going ? Was it possible that he was going to see Colonel Wharncliffe ? At all hazards he must find out. But he knew better than to risk a direct question. It was not until Denham had drunk himself stupid, and the landlord had returned to announce that the stranger’s horse was at the door, that he took any definite action. He quietly left the room then, took his hat and cloak from a stand in the passage, and made his way into the dark road.

‘Who are those two gentlemen ?’ asked Ferguson, turning to the landlord as they emerged into the passage.

'I'm sure I can't inform you, sir,' replied that worthy, much pleased that he was really unable to give the desired information to his disagreeable guest. 'They are but passing travellers just come to-day from Newmarket.'

Ferguson made no comment, but, mounting his horse, bade his host good-night and rode off. When he heard the inn door close, he reined in his horse for a minute and looked round. A small boy was passing by; he hailed him.

'Which is the way to Mondisfield Hall?' he asked in a slightly lowered voice.

'Right on,' replied the urchin. 'Over the brook yonder till ye come to the cross roads, then to the right till ye come to the park gate on the left.'

'How far is it?'

'A matter of two miles,' replied the boy, touching his hat as the stranger thanked him and rode on.

When he was well out of earshot Randolph calmly emerged from behind the churchyard wall, and, striding irreverently over the grassy mounds, made his way back to the road.

'First to get Denham settled,' he said to himself.

And in a matter-of-fact, business-like way he walked into the parlour, coolly assured his drowsy companion that it was very late, and that he must go up to bed, saw him safely up-stairs, and then with equal coolness and precision drew the key of Hugo's prison from his pocket, fitted it with some difficulty in the clumsy lock, and quietly admitted himself into the room. He had not expected to find Hugo in bed, still less to find him asleep, for it was not nearly so late as he had represented to Denham. Drawing aside the red curtains he looked down with an expression of mingled impatience and anxiety at his brother. He was fond of the lad in spite of his austerity, and Hugo looked so weary, yet so comfortable, that he was loth to disturb him. But Randolph was not the man to deny himself in any way. Hugo was the only available helper, Sir Peregrine being wounded and Denham far from sober; moreover, he could trust his brother as he could trust no other living soul.

'Wake up!' he said, authoritatively, shaking him with one hand, and holding the candle close to his face with the other.

Hugo started up and rubbed his eyes.

'What is it?' he said, sleepily.

'Put on your things and come out with me,' said Randolph, concisely.

There was no need to say 'Be quick!' for Hugo was up before he could have spoken the words, showing no trace of ill-temper at being thus roused, strangling his yawns while he dressed, half-asleep, but, as usual, promptly and unquestioningly obedient.

Not a word passed between the two brothers, they were never a talkative pair, and Hugo knew that he was still in disgrace, and would not have presumed to speak before he was spoken to. Randolph watched him with a certain admiration, he was so quick, so well trained, so wonderfully loyal. In a very few minutes he was ready and the two went down-stairs, Hugo much wondering what was about to happen, and half fearing that Sir Peregrine must have died. A question trembled on his lips but he would not put it, only when they met the landlord down below in the passage he listened eagerly for Randolph's explanation.

'We shall be out for a time, don't lock up till we return.'

'Certainly, your honour,' said the host, bowing obsequiously. 'Tis a fine night, gentlemen, but cold.'

He opened the door for them, Randolph pausing for a minute to light his pipe, then strolling out leisurely as though he were merely going to take an evening ramble. When they had gone a few hundred yards, however, he suddenly quickened his pace, walking so fast indeed that Hugo had as much as he could do to keep up with him. Where could they be going? The night was dark and cloudy enough to make walking along the rough roads no easy matter; they hailed the light which yet lingered in a few of the wayside cottages. Ah! here was the brook which he and Denham had forded on horseback that afternoon. It flowed right across the road, but there was a narrow plank at the side for foot passengers. They crossed this, and walked on in silence to the cross roads. With great curiosity Hugo waited to see which turn they should take.

'Right wheel!' said Randolph, shortly, and they mounted the slight hill.

Was he, perhaps, going to the scene of the duel? And, if so, why? Randolph cleared his throat. Was an explanation at last coming?

'I have brought you with me to-night, Hugo,' he began, 'because you are one of the few people whom I can in all things trust.'

Hugo's heart beat quickly. This from Randolph was indeed high praise.

‘We will say no more about your behaviour this afternoon. For this once, I overlook it. What is more, I now give you an opportunity of proving your loyalty to me.’

‘What are you going to do?’ asked Hugo, unable to keep the question back any longer.

‘That is at present no concern of yours. Suffice it to say that I hope to-night’s work will be useful both to you and me, and—what is of more importance—to the king himself. Now, can I depend upon you?’

‘Yes,’ said Hugo, eagerly.

‘This is all I ask of you,’ continued Randolph. ‘Observe, remember, and hold your tongue till I bid you speak.’

‘I will,’ said Hugo, inwardly wondering what Randolph had in hand.

Again they walked on in silence, picking their way as best they could among the ruts. At length they reached the gate which led to Mondisfield Hall. Randolph softly opened it, cautiously closed it. They stood within the park, and, with something of awe, Hugo glanced around. It was all so solemn and still. The broad avenue, with its grassy glades, and its giant elms, looked like the nave of some vast cathedral; the night wind sighed and moaned. Hugo shivered. Somehow a feeling of unconquerable distaste, even of dread, arose within him. To what had he pledged himself? What was this mysterious work which was to benefit the king? As he mused, Randolph turned.

‘Tread lightly, and don’t so much as whisper. Merely follow me.’

What was this work which could lead his brother to steal like a thief towards an unknown dwelling? Well! he was in for it now, and there could be no turning back.

By this time they had reached the moat, and were within easy sight of the house. There was no very great risk of being seen, for the night was cloudy. Randolph bent almost double, however, as they crossed the drawbridge, nor did he venture to walk upright till they had reached the comparative shelter of the high hedge overshadowed by stately fir-trees which bordered the lesser of the two lawns. Stealthily, almost noiselessly, they crept on, Randolph keenly anxious, Hugo utterly miserable. His whole nature rose up against this mysterious work, whatever it might be. To observe, to remember, and to hold his tongue! Well, he could hardly help keeping the first two injunctions; naturally his eyes were sharply watchful at such a time, nor was he likely to forget anything which

might come under his notice in this objectionable way. Most assuredly, also, he was not likely to mention to any living soul a proceeding which even now, dimly as he understood it, caused him such shame.

Softly Randolph approached the window on the left of the door, crept in among the bushes which surrounded it, looked and listened. There was neither a sound nor a ray of light. He emerged from the shrubs, and led the way past the great door, over the smooth approach to the grassy terrace beyond. There were no more shrubs now, nor even a border to betray their footmarks; the grass grew to the very wall, and, what was better, the next window was protected neither by curtain nor shutter. It was somewhat high from the ground, but on a convenient level for their eyes. With much curiosity, Hugo looked in. He saw, in the dim light, a large wainscoted hall, set round with stately old furniture. As far as he could make out, there was the usual minstrels' gallery at one end, but at the opposite end, both he and his brother instantly perceived that rays of light were streaming through the cracks in a doorway which apparently led to some other room. Randolph beckoned to him to come on. A second huge window looked into the same hall, then came two more windows, much narrower and much nearer the ground. This was clearly the room from which the light had proceeded; and now, indeed, drawing quite close, they could see that light streamed through two large cracks in the window-shutter as well, and, in the stillness of the night, could detect a low hum of voices. Noiselessly they both crept close to the glass, so close, indeed, that their eyelashes actually brushed the panes.

The whole of the room was distinctly visible to each. It was a large, long room, wainscoted in a sort of yellow-brown colour, and hung with oil paintings, evidently portraits of the family. The fire had burnt low; on the table in the middle of the room was a lamp, and at one end the remains of supper. At the opposite end, facing the window, sat four men talking together. One of them was Ferguson. Randolph recognised him again in a moment. He was speaking in his harsh voice, apparently with great earnestness, while the two younger men seemed to hang upon his words as though he were some oracle. The eldest of the party, and evidently the master of the house, sat with his head resting on his hands, and in his grave, dark face there was nothing of the eager hopefulness plainly visible in the looks of the others. With his long, dark hair, his stern features, his expression of quiet sadness, he might have sat

as a typical representation of sorrow without hope. Ferguson waxed more loud and eager. His words reached the two listeners outside.

‘The people cannot, shall not—and, mark me, *will* not endure a Popish tyrant. You all of you know that, and would fain fight again for the Exclusion Bill, were there but a Parliament. And once more mark my words! The king is but a Papist in disguise, and in that worse than his brother, who at least is an honest man.’

Apparently the master of the house strove to moderate the speaker’s energy. He bent forward, and said something, which was inaudible to the two invisible spectators. After that, only a low hum of voices reached them. Ferguson produced his shagreen pocket-book, and began to read them extracts, and once the master of the house crossed the room, and, opening a book-case with glass doors, took down a volume to search for some reference. This brought him so near to the window, that Hugo’s heart began to beat at double time. The man had such a noble face, that he could not endure the idea that Randolph meditated denouncing him to the government. Worse still, that he himself might be used as the second witness.

Suddenly his heart almost ceased to beat. With eyes opened to their widest extent, he stared at the apparition which, with gliding, ghostly motion, appeared upon the scene. Noiselessly the door had opened; noiselessly there walked in a white-robed figure. The two younger men uttered exclamations of terror, even Ferguson looked startled as the figure advanced slowly towards the book-case, and seemed about to open it. Good heavens! it was no apparition! It was Joyce herself—Joyce, whom Hugo had thought never to see again. And better far, so he bitterly felt, that he had never again seen her, rather than see her in such a manner. Alas! alas! had he been brought to play the spy on her father?

‘’Tis but my little daughter,’ he heard the master of the house explain to his guests. ‘She has the habit of walking in her sleep; but ’tis many years since she was troubled with it.’ Then going up to her, ‘Joyce dear, come with me.’

‘She’ll wake up and discover us!’ suggested one of the party, looking much concerned.

‘I don’t think it,’ said the father. ‘But keep still. Joyce, my love, come.’

The girl instinctively turned towards him. He took her hand in his, and quietly led her out of the room.

Hugo felt a touch on his arm. Randolph motioned to him to come, and stealthily they crept back through the garden, across the moat, and out into the park. It was not till they were safely in the road again that Randolph spoke.

‘You have done extremely well,’ he said, ‘and shown no small self-control. That ghostly-looking maid was enough to put a fellow off his guard.’

‘Tell me now why you brought me here?’ said Hugo, in a voice which even to himself sounded unnatural.

‘Because I wanted a second witness, and had reason to believe that we might be able to hunt down a nest of conspirators.’

‘What do you know about the master of the house? Why do you wish to get him into trouble?’

Randolph gave a short laugh.

‘Shall I tell you his name?’ he said. ‘His name is Francis Wharncliffe.’

Hugo almost gasped.

‘And that was his daughter?’ he asked.

‘Ay, that was one of his six daughters, and you and I may thank a merciful Providence that he has no son, otherwise I should never come into the property.’

At last Hugo understood the reason of his brother’s conduct. A few days, nay, a few hours before it would scarcely have shocked him; he would not have troubled himself to think twice about the matter. But that afternoon he had been awakened, sharply and thoroughly. A vision of good, a vision of evil, had presented themselves to him, and the spirit of manly independence had been roused within him. He felt like one who rises from dreams of blissful and luxurious ease, to find that all the pleasant existence was an illusion, while life, hard, perplexing, full of cares and contradictions, has to be faced and fought.

‘Mind this,’ said Randolph, after a pause. ‘You must on no account betray our name to any one at the inn. No one must suspect that we are kinsmen to the lord of the manor.’

‘Is there need for all this mystery?’ said Hugo, in a tone of disgust.

‘Certainly there is need of it if I say so. You forget yourself.’

Randolph spoke angrily, and Hugo thought it expedient to make no reply. Wearily he plodded on, almost too tired to feel very acutely, or to wish very much for anything but that they were back at the ‘White Horse.’

'You are faint,' remarked Randolph at length, noticing with what an effort he kept from lagging behind. And with rough kindness he drew his arm within his. Hugo winced.

'Good lord!' exclaimed Randolph, really concerned. 'I had forgot Sir Peregrine stuck you. Here, come the other side. Is it much?'

'Oh, no, a mere scratch,' said Hugo, beginning to step out briskly.

In all his life Randolph had never spoken to him with so much solicitude, nor had the two brothers ever before walked arm-in-arm. It made up to Hugo for all the trouble and perplexity of the day, and his heart throbbed with eager delight as his guardian added,

'You fought well, and I was proud of you.'

CHAPTER IV.

A WARNING.

The generous Christian must as well improve
 I' th' quality of the serpent as the dove;
 He must be innocent, affraid to do
 A wrong, and crafty to prevent it too,
 They must be mixt and temper'd with true love
 An ounce of serpent serves a pound of dove.

FRANCIS QUARLES.

THE next day was a Sunday. Hugo slept late, was in fact only roused by the bells of the village church chiming for morning service. The sun was shining brightly, the sky was cloudless; it was one of those still autumn days when winter seems yet far off, and Nature enjoys a sort of halcyon calm. Hugo's wound was painful, much more painful than on the previous day; spite, too, of the sunshine, and the gaily pealing bells, and the country quiet, he awoke with a heavy consciousness of coming trouble, which was curiously foreign to him. He dressed rapidly, and went down to the inn parlour. The sanded floor, the blazing fire, and the well-laden breakfast-table looked tempting. His brother was not there, only Denham was at the table, dividing his attentions between a dish of excellent trout and a comely serving-wench.

He waved the girl aside as Hugo entered, and the two friends were left to themselves.

‘So, mine Hugo!’ ejaculated Denham, ‘are you recovered from your duelling?’

‘Nearly,’ said Hugo. ‘Where is Randolph?’

‘Somewhere between this and St. Edmondsbury, at what exact point I am unable to inform you.’

‘What has he gone there for?’ asked Hugo, astonished and slightly alarmed.

‘Well, you must know that while you were in the arms of Morpheus, and, by the bye, you must have more than slept the clock round, the leech from St. Edmondsbury arrived. Such a pompous apothecary as you never saw. Sir Peregrine will do well enough, don’t alarm yourself.’

‘But Randolph——’

‘Went to St. Edmondsbury on his own behoof and not on Sir Peregrine’s, I’ll warrant you. Look here! an you can keep a secret and will swear not to tell Randolph that I told you, you shall hear the whole matter. After Sir Peregrine had been well physicked, bled, bandaged, and so forth, the worthy leech came down and breakfasted with us. We talked of one thing and another, and presently he let fall that he knew the family at the Hall, and had in former years oftentimes visited them.

“‘What kind of a man is Colonel Wharncliffe?” asked your brother.

‘Said the leech, “A most dangerous man, a known Republican, and, what is worse, he has without let or hindrance given his biggest barn to a set of vile conventiclers who meet there unmolested every Sunday.”

‘Said your brother, “Why is it allowed when contrary to law?”

‘Said the leech, shaking his head, “Colonel Wharncliffe was a pleasant-spoken man and respected by the people, and none in these parts would inform against him.”

‘By and by, when the leech had gone to have a last look at Sir Peregrine, Randolph told me what, doubtless, you know, that he hated this kinsman of yours like sin, and wanted to oust him. He says this may be a stepping-stone, and will at least get the colonel heavily fined, if not imprisoned. Moreover, it will put a stop to the conventicle, which is safe to be a den for breeding Protestant plots.’

‘And Randolph has gone to St. Edmondsbury to inform?’

‘Ay; though of course not under his own name. Then

this morning, when the good folks are on their knees, there will be a dramatic entertainment—enter a dozen wolves in soldier's clothing, who disperse the lambs and arrest the shepherds. I've a good mind to be there to see.'

Hugo made scarcely any comment on this long speech. His reputation for dreamy indifference stood him now in good stead, and Denham had not the faintest idea that while he quietly discussed his plateful of fish and drank the home-brewed ale, he was racking his brain for some means of frustrating his brother's scheme. Dared he do it? Dared he absolutely work against Randolph, check him in a matter for which he cared so much and must have swallowed down so many scruples? It seemed as if he were always fated to have Randolph on one side and Joyce on the other, as if he were to be forced to choose between them. What was worse, it seemed to be justice and independence pitted against tyranny and lawful authority. In the small arena of his private life he had to fight the same battle, make the same choice which lay before the nation at large.

'Going to church?' asked Denham.

'Yes,' said Hugo, mechanically.

'Then you had best look sharp about it. And look here, just give the serving-wench a call; she may as well clear the decks.'

'And amuse you,' added Hugo, with a smile.

He was not sorry to be rid of his companion, and, taking up his broad-brimmed hat, fringed all round with ostrich feathers, he left the inn and crossed over the way to the church. He took a seat close to the door, mechanically holding his hat before his eyes for a minute after his usual custom, but too much engrossed with thoughts of Colonel Wharncliffe's danger to attempt anything but the outward gesture. The parson and the clerk were reading the psalms between them; so few of the people could read that they could hardly be expected to make many of the responses. Perhaps merely because the words fitted in with the subject of his thoughts, one verse startled him into sudden attention. 'Thou hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, but hast set my feet in a large room.'

What distinct thought the words brought to him it would be hard to explain, but a consciousness that God would have freedom, breath, and, above all, no persecution, somehow dawned upon him. The 'I' of the psalm became to him the distant kinsman whose fate was practically in his hands.

'I became a reproof among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours; and they of mine acquaintance were afraid of me; and they that did see me without conveyed themselves from me.'

'Fear is on every side, while they conspire together against me, and take their counsel to take away my life.'

'My time is in Thy hand; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.'

'Oh, how plentiful is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee.'

'Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men; Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy tabernacle from the strife of tongues.'

Thus here and there sentences flashed forth with new meaning in the old words,—words which, true at the time to human nature, must be true throughout the ages.

But then as to Randolph? If he found out who had frustrated his plans, his wrath would be something barely endurable! And, after all, why should he defend a man with whom he did not agree, and defend him at such risk to himself?

It has been left for a modern thinker to frame the noble maxim, 'Conscience is higher than consequence,' but yet it was the dim perception of this truth, a truth which he could not have put into words, which made Hugo at last decide that come what might he would warn the congregation in the barn. He tore a leaf from his pocket-book, and, during the reading of the lessons, wrote the following lines—

'SIR,—An informer has this morning lodged an information against you at St. Edmondsbury, as one who frequenteth conventicles. The informer will endeavour, and I doubt not will succeed, to bring over sufficient force to scatter the congregation and to arrest the leading members. Be advised by one who loveth not persecution, and for the present discontinue your meetings.'

Having folded and directed this missive, he sat patiently waiting for the end of the second lesson. Through the pointed windows the sunshine streamed brightly, glorifying the simple gothic arches and pillars. The village church was plain enough and bare enough to please a Puritan; there was not a vestige of colour in it, and, contrasted with his glorious Temple church, it seemed to Hugo cold and even ugly. And yet, as he sat there looking at the golden sunshine flickering among the

shadows of the trees cast on the chancel wall, he felt a strange love for the place, the sort of love we bear to all places where we have had a glimpse of something which was before unknown to us.

‘He that is not against us is on our part,’ read the old clergyman. ‘For whosoever shall give you a cup of cold water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.’

The congregation stood up to sing the ‘Jubilate,’ such of them, at least, as did not turn to look at the young gallant who, having behaved strangely enough all the service, now got up and left the church, a proceeding which caused the village worthies to shake their heads.

‘Better have stayed to ogle the girls through the sermon,’ they agreed afterwards, ‘than go out just when parson had given forth “O be joyful in the Lord, all ye lands, come before His presence with a song.”’ Instead of ‘coming’ the graceless gallant ‘went.’

There was not a minute to be lost ; he almost ran for the greater part of the two miles ; indeed, by the time he reached the large barn which stood by the wayside not far from the entrance to the Mondisfield farmyard, he was so much out of breath that he was obliged to wait some minutes before he was cool and collected enough to enter the place and deliver his letter. In the meantime, through a hole in the wooden wall, he looked in at the congregation.

The barn was large and lofty ; at one end was stacked a quantity of golden corn, in the centre at a wooden desk stood a little, insignificant man, preaching. Before him, some sitting on rough benches, some on the floor, were ranged in rows about forty men and women, all listening to the discourse with rapt attention. When the words found any special echo in their hearts, notably when the preacher alluded to the need of courage and patience under present persecution, there was a low hum of agreement, a sort of subdued applause, which surprised and somewhat amused Hugo, who was utterly at a loss to understand how sane people could prefer to worship in a draughty barn, at serious risk to their lives and to their property, when the village church had been built on purpose for them. There was something very remarkable, however, in the spectacle. They were all so desperately in earnest, religion was to them such a tremendous reality. As he watched their serious faces, their expression of intense listening, he was reminded somehow of a day in Westminster Abbey, when he

had watched the deeply reverential manner of good Bishop Ken. Each sight stirred within him a dim perception that there were more things in heaven and earth than were dreamed of in his philosophy. Could it be that as in childhood he had cared only for flowers because of their beauty and fragrance, knowing nothing of their structure nor dreaming that science could open his eyes to a new world of beauty within—could it be so also with religion? Had he as yet only a vague satisfaction in something that seemed to him beautiful? Was there indeed for him the possibility of a deeper knowledge, a clearer revelation? If so, what in these matters was the microscope? and who stood in the position of Mr. Robert Hooke, perpetual secretary to the Royal Society, and author of *Micrographia*?

‘Men can rise above the circumstances in which they are placed,’ urged the preacher, with an emphasis that roused Hugo from his own thoughts. ‘Look at Paul, read what he tells of his hard times. Was he conquered by ’em, think you? No, no, he rose above ’em, turned ’em into means of glorifying the Master. You *must* rise above the circumstances in which you are placed; if you don’t, your circumstances will swallow you up, will drag you down lower and lower.’

Here the good man fell to talking of ‘Election,’ and consequently Hugo’s attention flagged, the speaker no longer appealed to him. He shifted his position and looked through a fresh hole. Ah! there was the man he wanted! and close beside him there sat Joyce, sweet Joyce with her grave blue eyes fixed on the preacher,—perhaps still wondering whether she was one of the ‘elect.’ Good heavens! and he was lingering here in the luxury of watching her, when delay might mean danger to her whole family! Feeling more of a black sheep and an outsider than he had ever felt in his life before, he opened the door of the barn and with slightly heightened colour walked right through the space which lay between the preacher and the rows of listeners until he reached the bench where with his wife and his six children sat his unknown kinsman.

The congregation in their sad-coloured clothes stared suspiciously at the new-comer. Dark green and rich crimson, flowing locks and fantastic feathers seemed very much out of place in the barn. What did the stranger mean by composedly stalking right through their assembly in this way? It was an untoward event, and doubtless boded no good to the wayside conventicle. Looks of suspicion, looks of fear, looks of uncon-

trollable dislike fell upon him as he quietly made his way on. He was fully conscious of them, but as usual whatever inward perturbation he might have felt was veiled entirely by the calm indifferent manner which invariably characterised him.

‘Read it without delay,’ he whispered, handing the note to Colonel Wharncliffe, who in undisguised astonishment glanced first at the missive, then at the bearer. One swift look at Joyce, one recognising return glance from her clear childlike eyes, then again he ran the gauntlet of the doubtful and perplexed Nonconformists and quitted the assembly.

Scarcely had he closed the great wooden doors, however, with elaborate care, courteously anxious to make as little disturbance as might be, when it was hastily reopened and Colonel Wharncliffe hurried after him.

‘I have to thank you, sir, for your very considerate communication,’ he said. ‘I hope you will be good enough to let me know to whom I am indebted?’

‘Not to me,’ said Hugo. ‘But to the spirit of justice which, though you may not think it, does find a dwelling-place in the heart of many a Churchman.’

‘I can well believe that,’ said the colonel. ‘We do not wish to assume any superiority, merely to claim our right as free Englishmen to worship God in our own way. But, pray, let me know your name, for I have a notion that you must be the same gentleman who courteously succoured my little daughter but yesterday.’

‘That, sir, was an act for which I need no thanks,’ said Hugo, quietly. ‘The reward lay in the doing. As for my name I would rather withhold it, and I pray you to pardon me.’

‘It must be as you think best,’ said the colonel, with some regret in his tone. ‘I thank you none the less heartily; your information will have saved many a heartache this day.’

Hugo seemed scarcely to hear him, he was listening intently to a sound of distant hoofs, far away as yet, but certainly approaching them along the St. Edmondsbury road.

‘For God’s sake, sir, disperse the meeting instantly,’ he exclaimed. ‘I hear horsemen drawing near. And show me some hiding-place for the moment,—I am undone if my guardian sees me.’

‘There! under the willows,’ said the colonel, pointing to the other side of the road, where across fertile fields wound the Mondisfield brook surrounded by a thick jungle of rushes, willow herb, and low bushes.

Without another word Hugo sprang across the broad ditch which bordered the field, and was soon lost to sight among the tangled green labyrinth. The colonel did not pause to watch him, he had the safety of the whole congregation to think of. Promptly he returned to the barn, shut and barred from within the double doors, and, signing to the minister to pause, said, in a clear, authoritative voice—

‘My friends, we are in great danger. We must disperse, and that instantly. Hurst!’ turning to one of his men, ‘throw open the doors into the stack-yard. Now make all speed into the park, and keep not in one body, but scatter yourselves in groups. Let the women and such as cannot run follow on to the Hall, where we will shelter them.’

The words produced a chorus of exclamations, but the Non-conformists showed nothing like panic; with grave, anxious faces, with prompt submission, they obeyed the colonel. There was little if any confusion, only great speed, great quietness, while through the stack-yard in different directions fled the peaceable congregation, who but a few minutes before had been gravely listening to the assurance that ‘men can rise above the circumstances in which they are placed.’

Mrs. Wharncliffe hurriedly led the way to the house, helping on a poor woman who was burdened with two little children; five of the daughters followed her, each guiding or assisting one of those who were deemed too old or infirm to make their escape. Only Joyce still lingered, she could not bear to leave before her father, who like the captain of a vessel stayed to the very last. Her heart beat so fast that it nearly choked her, and yet all the time she was conscious of the sort of pleasure she had felt once when her pony ran away with her, a sense of risk, a demand for high courage, and strength, and coolness.

And now the sound of horses’ hoofs had stopped, but only to give place to a much more alarming sound, the sound of men’s voices. Loud voices declaring that ‘this was the place, this the accursed conventicle, this the vile preaching-shop.’

‘Joy! are you here?’ exclaimed Colonel Wharncliffe, for the first time becoming conscious of her presence. ‘We are too late now to run, child. Here,—this way!’ and seizing her hand he dragged her after him into the nearest outhouse.

‘The loft,’ he whispered, motioning her towards a rough ladder. Joyce could climb like a squirrel; she was up in the loft in less than a minute, crouching down among the hay with her father’s arm round her.

Heavy blows were being dealt on the barn doors ; at length they gave way, and from their place in the loft, which was on the side of the yard immediately facing the barn, Joyce and the colonel could see that a body of about twenty men broke in. There was a murmur of disappointment when they found that the place was empty.

‘I made sure we should have been in time,’ said the leader, turning to a gentleman richly dressed in crimson and wearing a long peruke. ‘Some one has given them notice of your intention, your honour, for you see spite of our hot haste the birds are flown.’

Randolph frowned. Inwardly he was in a towering rage ; but he answered, with cold composure, ‘It is impossible that they can have been warned. Who could have warned them?’

‘Your honour knows best to whom you imparted the fact of your mission to St. Edmondsbury.’

Denham ! could Denham have betrayed him ? Could Hugo possibly have got wind of his intention, and once again have been troubled by a conscience, that truly undesirable possession ? It was barely possible, and yet who else could have done it ? Vowing vengeance on the unknown destroyer of his hopes, he turned once more to the chief constable.

‘What are these idiots doing ?’ he asked, angrily pointing to the men who were smashing up the benches and splintering the desk which served as pulpit into a hundred fragments.

‘We have orders, your honour, in every case to strip the conventicles,’ returned the man ; ‘we always break up the pews and pulpit, but i’ faith there’s little enough to wreck in this poor place. It will serve to remind them though another day.’

‘But we waste time !’ said Randolph, impatiently. ‘Why not order the men up to the Hall, where there might be some hope of catching this fanatical colonel ?’

‘We can go up to the Hall, sir, an you will,’ said the constable. ‘But I can’t arrest the colonel unless he be found a-praying or a-preaching, or a-worshipping somehow with over the lawful number.’

‘Confound your scruples !’ said Randolph, angrily, ‘I tell you he’s a pestilent treason-monger, a vile conventicler, one who harbours heretics and preachers.’

‘Very like, sir, very like,’ said the constable. ‘But I’ve only a warrant to arrest such as be found a-worshipping in unlawful ways ; I can’t go beyond my warrant, sir.’

‘Confound you and your warrant too,’ exclaimed Randolph,

furiously. 'Bring your men on to the Hall at once. Perchance we may yet find the knave on his knees.'

The chief gave the word of command, and instantly the men formed into a column and marched through the stack-yard, passing close under the loft where the colonel and Joyce crouched among the hay. Joyce hid her face in sudden panic as the slow tramp of their feet drew nearer and nearer. It was hard to realise that they could see and yet not be seen, and not until the steps were retreating in the distance did she dare to look forth. How strange it seemed that their own stack-yard, where only the day before yesterday they had been merrily playing at 'Barley Break,' should now be the scene of such an alarming incursion! Tramp, tramp, tramp, gradually the sound of the many feet died away into silence, and the last glimpse of the crimson hat of the hot-tempered gentleman disappeared.

'Oh, father!' exclaimed Joyce. 'Who can that be, and why does he so hate you?'

'I know not, child. 'Tis a face that is wholly strange to me,' replied the colonel. 'Doubtless he is the guardian of whom that brave lad spoke to me but now. See, we will come from our hiding-place now that they are well out of view. They can do no mischief, thank God! up at the house. Come with me, child, we must keep out of the way till they have dispersed.'

Together they emerged from the outhouse, and, passing out of the yard, crossed the road and made their way into the field where Hugo lay hid. Joyce breathed more freely when they were safely sheltered by the willows. Till then she had hardly dared to look behind her. Suddenly she paused and clutched her father's arm.

'I see a man's head!' she whispered. 'There, hid low among the bushes.'

'It is our loyal preserver,' said the colonel. 'I must speak a few words to him. From what passed between the constable and my unknown foe, I fear he will get into trouble.'

'Oh!' said Joyce, 'then 'twill be the second time he has suffered through helping us. Can you not save him, father, warn him of the danger?'

'Thank heaven! you are safe!' exclaimed Hugo, raising himself as they approached him. 'I greatly feared my warning had been too late.'

'We are safe, thanks to you,' replied the colonel, warmly. 'And now it is solely on your account that I am anxious.'

Tell me, where would it least raise suspicion for your guardian to find you ?'

'At Mondisfield Church were there time to reach it,' said Hugo. 'But I fear to try, lest he should overtake me on the road.'

'We will show you a much nearer track across the fields,' said Colonel Wharncliffe. 'See, as the crow flies it is but a short distance. The congregation are, I trust, all escaped by now, and I and my daughter cannot do better than take a quiet walk in the fields, for which at present no man can arrest us.'

'I hope, sir, your wound is doing well,' said Joyce, shyly, as they walked rapidly on.

'Thanks to your skilful bandaging, it is healing fast,' he replied. And then Colonel Wharncliffe referred to the duel, and a desultory conversation ensued, which afterwards Hugo could not recall, though he could remember every change in Joyce's face, every glance from those heavenly eyes, every tone of her clear childish voice.

Yet ever mingled with the rapture of being near her was a miserable sense of unworthiness, a wretched consciousness that against his will he had watched them last night when they little suspected it. Worse still, that at any time he might be required to give evidence against the colonel. His usually tranquil face bore traces of trouble and anxiety, which did not escape Colonel Wharncliffe. He felt sorry for the boy, drawn to him strongly, unaccountably. Would he in his life of temptation manage to 'rise above the circumstances in which he was placed' ? Recalling the far stronger face of the guardian, and realising how much it had cost the lad to go against him that day, he could not feel very hopeful.

All too soon they reached the end of their walk ; sadly enough Hugo raised Joyce's little hand to his lips, and turned to bid farewell to her father.

'I shall never fail to think of what you have done for us this day,' said the colonel, grasping his hand. 'God grant the rest of your life be in tune with this beginning.'

Hugo turned away, feeling positively choked. Oh, God ! that this *had* been the beginning ! That blind obedience had not landed him in such a strait ! that habitual submission had not almost paralysed his will ! And Joyce, sweet blue-eyed Joyce ! He should never see her again, never be able to tell her of his love, never, never in the most distant future dare to dream of her as his wife. Overwhelmed with the new con-

sciousness of his weakness, he re-entered the village church. The sermon had been long, and now there lingered some half-dozen country people, for it was the first Sunday of the month, 'Sacrament Sunday,' as they called it. At first Hugo could not make out what had happened, but it was a relief to find that the service was not over, and that for the present he was safe from Randolph. How strange it seemed that while the old clergyman had been slowly proceeding with the morning service, he should have lived through what seemed like half a lifetime!

How it happened he never quite knew, but as he mechanically knelt on in one of the high pews, dimly conscious that the old man in the chancel was reading some prayer, two words seemed to separate themselves from the unintelligible surroundings. 'Do this!'

In his misery, in his shame, in his hopelessness, it occurred to him for the first time that here was a command which he had neglected. And so it came to pass that, behind all the villagers, pausing even for the old cripple in the smock frock, the stranger walked up the aisle and knelt at the altar rails.

He came so quietly that the villagers did not notice him, but the old clergyman was sorely perplexed. Here was a stranger who had behaved very oddly, who had come in late, left in the 'Jubilate,' returned in the middle of the communion service, and having missed both confession and absolution, presented himself at the altar, though in all probability he was the very man who had fought the duel by the roadside, which was already the talk of the village. What in the world was he to do? Moving from one to another of the communicants, he had arrived at no definite conclusion when he found himself opposite the new-comer. Involuntarily he paused, half hesitating. The stranger's head was bent low; he raised it now, however; the clergyman gave him one searching glance, and after that hesitated no more.

'I fear you have done an illegal thing,' said his wife, as they walked home to the vicarage together.

'Confound legality!' said the old parson, who was not at all above swearing. 'I tell you he had the face of a Chrisom child! I couldn't have refused him.'

CHAPTER V.

HUGO MEETS A PATRIOT.

GLOUCESTER. The noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his offence,
 honesty! 'Tis strange. *King Lear, Act I. Scene ii.*

FOOL. Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

KENT. Why, fool?

FOOL. Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour: nay, an thou
 canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'lt catch cold shortly.

King Lear, Act I. Scene iv.

It needed no comet, as Colonel Wharncliffe very truly remarked, to foretell national troubles in the year 1682. Never perhaps in the whole history of the country had the political, social, and religious outlook been more gloomy.

Rivers of blood had been shed scarcely half a century before to preserve the liberties of England, and to protest against absolutism and tyranny: yet in this year the majority of the nation seemed willing idly to acquiesce in the illegal encroachments of the king. The preceding generation had dearly bought the nation's right of Representative Government; yet tamely, miserably, contemptibly, the succeeding generation submitted once again to the Stuart despotism. The Exclusion Bill had been rejected by the Lords, mainly through the king's influence. The General Election of the year 1681, which had produced so much excitement, so much eager expectation in the country, had proved worse than useless. The new parliament, summoned by the king to Oxford in the month of March, was dissolved by him in April; while so great was the fear and distrust of both parties, that the Commons thought it prudent to surround themselves with a strong escort, and the king was accompanied by his guards.

From this time dated the era of the 'Second Stuart Tyranny,' to be ended—as all tyrannies must be ended—by a Revolution.

How it came to pass that Englishmen endured such a state of things for years, it is indeed difficult to surmise. Perchance the chief blot on the annals of the Commonwealth—the execution of the king—at length avenged itself, the bad seed bearing now its bitter fruit in a certain inexplicable attachment to the son of the beheaded monarch,—a man who deserved such attachment even less than his father. However it was, the fact remains, that the country submitted to be ruled by a

tyrant, to be without a parliament, to lose the high position among European nations gained for England by Cromwell, and to be bought by Louis XIV. into political slavery, the price of which served partly to keep the king's mistresses.

One great barrier still stood, however, in Charles's way. There could not be absolute government while the charters of the City of London and of the other cities remained. Consequently all his efforts were bent to induce the cities either by fair means or foul to cede their ancient privileges, and the journals of the time show all too plainly with what criminal speed they complied with the royal suggestion, and surrendered their charters.

The social outlook was even worse than the political. The reaction from Puritan intolerance and ultra-gravity had, of course, come about at the Restoration, and liberty had degenerated into licence. But this alone is insufficient to account for the blatant wickedness of the reign of Charles II. A wave of vice seemed to pass over the country, vice became the fashion. If any one dared to condemn the fashion, he was set down as a narrow-minded Puritan, and speedily snubbed. Shame was in those days an unknown quantity. 'The quality of mercy' was mentioned now and then by Portia in the play-house, and by the priest in the Church, but was rarely cultivated by any one; while cruelties which sicken the nineteenth-century reader were permitted, and even countenanced, by educated men and women.

As to the religious outlook, it was the most gloomy of all. The Church taught the doctrine of passive obedience, and truckled miserably to the Court. Brave and out-spoken Churchmen, who would not wink at wickedness even in high places, had sooner or later to seek safety in exile; while others, who would fain have followed in the steps of Christ, were thwarted on every side, and from the smallness of their numbers proved nearly powerless. The Latitudinarians—the followers of Jeremy Taylor—in vain strove to show that a good life was to be desired even more than an orthodox belief, that a broad-hearted toleration could alone bring about Christian unity. They were unable to stem the current of fierce, selfish intolerance, of Pharisaical self-contentment, of blind indifference to the sufferings of others.

The country was drenched with the blood of Roman Catholics, barbarously murdered merely for their opinions. The prisons were crammed with Nonconformists, eight thousand of whom died of the hardships they there met with in the miser-

able time which elapsed between the Restoration and the Revolution. Worst of all, there sprang up a gross, heartless, selfish materialism, an Atheism which, compared with the Secularism of modern times, was as the prodigal wallowing among the swine, to the prodigal struggling laboriously to his Father.

It was the 6th of November. All London was in a state of tumult and commotion, bells were ringing, bonfires preparing, crowds assembling in all the chief thoroughfares. Gunpowder Plot Day had this year fallen on a Sunday, and in consequence was to be kept on the succeeding day instead. Rumours had gone abroad that the king disapproved of the observance, and would fain have stopped it altogether, but no edict had been published, and the rumour only served to stimulate the zeal of the citizens, who had not as yet recovered from the panic caused by the Popish Plot.

The vast majority of the nation still believed in the reality of Oates' revelations, and in any case this was certainly the very last time to neglect the National Thanksgiving Day. The prentices donned their best clothes, and sallied forth on merry-making intent; the housewives prepared candles stuck in clay to be set out at nightfall on the window-sills; and the Temple students with scarcely an exception turned out into Fleet Street to take their part in the night's proceedings.

At one of the chambers in King's Bench Walk, however, Hugo sat buried in his books, not feeling at all inclined to stir for any recollections of Guy Fawkes, and the nation's memorable deliverance. Randolph was out, and was not likely to return that night; he had the premises to himself, and was blissfully enjoying the peaceful quiet, and the undivided possession of the lamp, the table, and the sea-coal fire, when the door was opened. He looked up quickly, not feeling at all inclined to welcome a visitor, but only Jeremiah stood there, the old servant who had been in the family more than twenty years, and who had done everything for Hugo since the Great Plague year, when father, mother, nurse, indeed all the household save the two brothers and the old servant, had been swept away in less than a week.

Jeremiah was a strongly-built, hard-featured man, and at first sight would have seemed to a casual observer the very last man to accept the post of general caretaker to a delicate child of three years old, just recovering from an attack of the deadly malady. He had proved, however, the most faithful and the most devoted attendant. It was to Jeremiah that the boy had

invariably turned for comfort when Randolph, for some childish fault or misadventure, had mercilessly thrashed him. It was to the old man's stimulating stories about the civil war that he owed a vast admiration for all deeds of courage and endurance, deeds that were naturally but little in accord with his quiet and over-bookish tendencies. Jeremiah was one of the old Cromwellian soldiers, and had fought at Marston Moor and at many other bloody encounters. Disbanded at the Restoration, the Ironsides had quietly retired into various trades and services, and Jeremiah had faithfully served the house of Wharnccliffe, and had proved the best influence in Hugo's life.

'Still at thy books, lad?' he said, in a tone of disapproval. 'Thou'lt never be a man of action if thou'rt ever reading.'

'We can't all be men of action, Jerry,' said Hugo, resigning himself to the interruption, with his usual sweetness of temper. 'Nature didn't mean us all for Ironsides, and you well know that you will never turn me into one. Draw your chair up and fetch your pipe, 'tis mighty pleasant by the fire, and I'll warrant your den is as cold as charity. Randolph will not be back to-night.'

The old servant drew one of the heavy oaken chairs to the hearth, shaking his head, however, in a meaning way over Hugo's last words.

'T'would break my heart, lad,' he said, after a pause, 'wert thou to take to such doings.'

'Would it?' said Hugo, smiling a little. 'What a staunch old Puritan you are, Jerry! Well, I must try not to break your heart then.'

'Broad is the road to destruction, and many there be that walk along it,' said Jeremiah, shaking his head.

'Come now, Jerry, don't begin a second book of Lamentations, for in truth one is quite enough.'

'Broad is the road, and with your guardian leading the way I fear me thou'lt follow.'

'Now, look here, Jerry!' Hugo started to his feet, and a glow of colour overspread his usually pale face. 'There's just one thing that I'll never stand from you. Say what you like against me, but as to my brother please to hold your tongue. I'll not hear one word against Randolph. Do you think that in all London you would find a master whose life would fit in with your rigid notions?'

'Belike not,' said the old servant, sententiously.

There was a silence. Hugo speedily repented of his momentary anger.

'I have vexed you. I am sorry,' he said. "'Twas a graceless speech from one whom you had tutored. But an you love me, Jerry, speak no more of the duchess and my brother. As for me—I think you may trust me that I'll not break your heart in the fashion you speak of—I would sooner break my own any day.'

Jerry's stern face relaxed, but what he would have said in reply remained for ever unknown, for as he was about to speak there was a knock at the outer door, which he hastened to open.

A rush of cold air from the staircase, and a loud cheerful voice saluting the old soldier, then a vision of many-coloured raiment, and Denham's merry face.

'You old hermit!' he exclaimed. 'I might have known I should find you up to the eyes in books. What, man! have you forgot that 'tis Gunpowder Plot Day, and the duty of all good Protestants is to be abroad anathematising Pope and Devil.'

'They'll do it well enough without my aid!' said Hugo, yawning. 'And of all things I hate a street uproar.'

'Bookworm! 'tis the best possible thing for you. Come, own that you've not stirred abroad this day.'

'Not once only but twice,' said Hugo, smiling.

'Ah, I can guess the length of your tether though. From King's Bench Walk to Pump Court, there to pore over your lessons like the good boy, then later on perhaps as far as the "Devil" to hear the news.'

'As far as the "Grecian,"' corrected Hugo.

'Marvellous!' exclaimed Denham. 'Do you hear, Jerry, your young master has actually walked nearly to Temple Bar and back. Come now, Jerry, you back me up, and tell him he ought to sally forth this fine evening.'

'In truth, sir, I was but now telling him he would never be a man of action if he did naught but read, read from morn till night.'

Hugo groaned, and tossed away his books.

'There's a conspiracy between you,' he said, laughing. And when you know I fought a duel on the fifth of last month, I think it's hard you won't leave me in peace beyond the sixth of this!'

So saying he took up his sword, leisurely proceeding to fasten his baldrick, while Jeremiah fetched his hat and cloak from the next room.

'Twill do thee good, lad, 'twill do thee good,' said the old

man, as he opened the outer door for the two to pass out, speaking much as a nurse might speak while offering medicine to a reluctant child.

Passing from the quiet purlieus of the Temple into Fleet Street was that night like passing from a peaceful paradise into a pandemonium. To stir was almost impossible, so dense was the crowd, and had it not been that a certain weird beauty in the scene touched Hugo's ready imagination, he would speedily have retreated again, to avoid the pushing and jostling which to one of his temperament was singularly distasteful.

But there was undoubtedly a subtle fascination in the dark mass of spectators and pleasure-makers, in the lurid glare of the bonfire already kindled over against the Inner Temple Gate, in the gleaming candles set out in all the windows, and in the flaring links which were borne hither and thither among the crowd. Laughter echoed here and there, amid the roar of many voices ; oaths, jests, questions, and sober talk, all mingled in one general medley, and all more or less overpowered by the ever-recurring chorus, shouted forth with untiring energy by every one possessed of zeal and good lungs—

'Remember, remember the fifth of November,
Gunpowder treason and plot.
I see no reason why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot
Holloa, boys ! Holloa, boys ! Make the bells ring,
Holloa, boys ! Holloa, boys ! God save the king !'

And in truth the bells did ring with right good will, well-nigh deafening every one, till the signal was given that the procession was drawing near, and then the noise of the multitude became slightly subdued ; it was just possible to hear the trumpets and drums which formed part of the ceremony.

Denham and Hugo, who were standing close to Temple Bar, had the benefit of a close and prolonged inspection of the long procession, for on the eastern side a halt was ordered, while before the statue of 'Good Queen Bess' one of the gorgeously-arrayed performers sang a patriotic song, extolling the memory of the good Queen, the Protestant religion, and the Reformation, denouncing all 'Popish knaves,' lamenting the unfortunate Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey, and warning all good citizens to shun the Pope and his boon companion. In the meantime, surrounded by hundreds of torch-bearers, heralded by minstrels and trumpeters, the poor old Pope, in a most life-like effigy, sat

aloft in his chair of state, covered with scarlet, richly adorned with gold fringe and embroidery. On his shoulder sat a dwarf who had consented to play the rôle of 'Devil,' and who certainly looked most diabolical as he climbed hither and thither, whispering evil counsel in the ears of the effigy first on one side, then on the other. Immediately behind the Pope there followed a bier on which was laid an effigy of the magistrate who had been murdered immediately after receiving Oates' first revelation of the so-called Popish Plot.

'Poor Sir Edmondsbury!' said Hugo, unable to help, smiling a little. 'I should have thought that by this time they had used him often enough at these shows. Why can't they let the poor man rest in peace?'

'He has but been dead a matter of four years!' said Denham, laughing. 'And you may be sure that Shaftesbury has no intention of laying aside his best puppet yet awhile. Hark how the people groan, even now! Never was such a murder as that for stirring up the populace.'

'I thought Shaftesbury had lost his last chance,' said Hugo. 'Does any one know where he has taken himself to?'

'Some say that he is in Holland, others that he is hiding in the city and devising mischief in his heart. But no one doubts that he has yet a finger in the pie. Depend upon it, he and his have pulled the strings which make these puppets dance to-night. A notable Protestant is my Lord Shaftesbury!'

By this time the procession was moving, and the Pope, the Devil, Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey, the minstrels, the trumpeters, the drummers, the torch-bearers, followed by a disorderly rabble, passed on again. Denham and Hugo were borne on by the crowd, whether they would or not, and were just in time to see the Devil leap lightly from the shoulder of his Holiness as the huge effigy was snatched down from its lofty throne, and hurled into the midst of the bonfire. Then there rose a chorus of joyful exclamation, storms of cheering and huzzaing, while the dwarf in the character of his Satanic majesty danced a hornpipe round the bonfire, jeering at the sufferings of his vanquished servant, who crackled gruesomely in the flames. After this there ensued a regular Saturnalia, the result of which was that many found themselves in prison that night, and that strict orders were immediately issued by the king that the 17th of the month, Queen Elizabeth's birthday, was not to be observed at all.

'By the bye,' said Denham, as they struggled along through the riotous crowd, 'I was to ask you to sup with us; my father

says you have deserted us of late. To-night Colonel Sydney will be with him, and he would fain have you two meet.'

Hugo smiled. It amused him somehow to think that Sir William Denham should think him worth introducing to any one, least of all to such a man as Colonel Sydney.

'I have heard Colonel Sydney's praises sung by Jeremiah ever since I can remember,' he said. 'At least, I suppose you mean him that was son to the late Lord Leicester.'

'Ay, he's the man. My father is wondrous pleased with him. In politics of course they are poles apart, but my father is too much of a scientific hermit to care a rush for that. For my part I can see naught in Colonel Sydney more than other folk, save that he is mighty stern. My father says that both you and he are anachronisms, and therefore he would have you meet.'

'How anachronisms?' said Hugo, laughing.

'He has an idea that you should rightly have been born two or three hundred years hence. That in fact you are both of you too far ahead of your surroundings to live comfortably in this wicked world.'

Hugo smiled and disclaimed any wish to postpone his life for so long a period. With all its faults and imperfections he clung to his own time, and would not have exchanged it for any dim advanced future had it been in his power to do so. For in truth, when brought face to face with the question, few people, even if they are miserable, would exchange their own individuality, and still fewer would accept that magic potion which would enable the partaker to wake up in a different century, even though their own century be chiefly distinguished by wickedness. Universal is the feeling that we would

'rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of.'

Sir William Denham's house was in Norfolk Street, and the two friends, having at length pushed through the dense crowd by St. Clement Danes, and struggled along the Strand, were not sorry to find themselves in smooth waters again. The distant roar of the multitude was to be heard even in the house, but it only served to accentuate the quiet within. This house was Hugo's ideal of comfort, and was indeed almost the only home he knew. The Denhams were all fond of him, and fortunately Randolph approved of the friendship, only objecting a little when he thought Sir William was endeavouring

to turn Hugo into a man of science rather than a man of the world.

The withdrawing-room looked very comfortable that cold November evening, after the murky darkness of Norfolk Street. It made a very pleasant picture with its polished floor, its many-coloured Eastern curtains, its Japanese cabinets, its blazing fire of logs, beside which sat Lady Denham, with her sweet placid face and snowy curls. A little spaniel on the hearthrug sprang up and barked at them, and was called to order by Mary Denham, Sir William's niece and ward, who sat, embroidery in hand, close to her aunt. On the other side of the hearth Sir William, with his kindly wrinkled old face, was talking eagerly to a stranger who sat in the great arm-chair.

Hugo knew that this must be Colonel Algernon Sydney, the anachronism, and he looked at him searchingly. He saw a man of about sixty, in a brown doublet with silver facings and cords, a plain white cravat tied with two small tassels, but not boasting the smallest piece of lace, and a dark brown periwig, not so long as those which had more recently come into fashion. These lesser details came to his notice in the first glance, afterwards they sank into utter insignificance; he could see nothing but the face—the strangely fascinating face which from that day forth was to become to him what no other face on earth could ever be. In expression it was sad and somewhat stern, particularly in profile, when the strongly-marked Roman features stood out in relief. The forehead was broad and high, and slightly receding, the whole face thin and long, with high cheek-bones and a pointed chin. He wore a slight moustache, and there was something in the pose of his lips which betokened an impatient temper that would not easily brook contradiction. This was, however, to some extent contradicted by his eyes, which were large, keen, and thoughtful, dark in colour, and in shape singularly beautiful.

He raised his curved eyebrows a little as Denham and his friend approached, an involuntary sign of surprise escaping him as he looked at Hugo. Indeed, so beautiful and so strange in expression was the boy's face, that very few could have avoided such a gesture.

'Allow me to introduce to you our friend Mr. Wharncliffe,' said Sir William, when the ladies had been saluted. 'Hugo—Colonel Sydney.'

Hugo bowed low.

'Your name is familiar to me,' said Sydney. 'Though how I know not. Do you not come of a Suffolk family?'

'We are distantly related to the Suffolk Wharncliffes, sir,' replied Hugo, and something in his manner showed Sydney that he had touched upon an embarrassing subject.

'Twas a Suffolk Wharncliffe that caused him his first duel,' said Rupert, laughing.

'Ay, ay,' said Sir William. 'I've been hearing about that, Hugo. Now I should have thought you were one of the few of his Majesty's subjects who might be trusted to obey the edict of '79.'

'The duel was not of my seeking, sir,' said Hugo, colouring.

'No, no,' said Sir William, smiling. 'We have heard the rights of the story from Rupert here; you did well, lad, very well, and Sir Peregrine deserved all you gave him. How fares it with him now, have you heard of him?'

'Randolph heard, this day was a se'nnight, and he was then walking again. I'm glad 'twas no worse.'

'You were less lucky than I was in my only challenge,' said Sydney, who had been keenly watching the lad while he spoke. 'Twas over in Holland, and our seconds managed to patch up a peace on honourable terms. A barbarous custom is the duel, but Royal edicts will not put an end to it.'

'Do you think, sir, that it will ever be stopped?' asked Hugo.

'For certain,' said Sydney. 'Not by the influence of his Majesty, but by the slow development of civilisation. As yet, you see, we are half barbarians, and sadly wanting in common-sense.'

'When folks in general learn something of science,' said Sir William, who never lost an opportunity of referring to his hobby.

'When every Englishman has grasped the thought that he owes something to his country,' said Sydney. 'When human life is rightfully valued, because human rights have been boldly claimed, and human duties realised.'

'But how will claiming of rights touch the matter?' asked Hugo, instinctively turning to Sydney as though he were some oracle.

'In this way,' said Sydney. 'A nation grows great just in proportion as the people making up the nation grow wise enough to do their duty, and bold enough to claim their rights. Take as example any given case, and perchance you'll see better what I mean. If Lady Denham and her niece will pardon us, and since they are exceptions to the rule I think they will, we will take the position at present given to women. Women are

but treated as the toys of men, treated as though they were fit only to satisfy the senses and maintain our species. How great an ignorance is this! Who doth not know that every age hath produced some women very excellent in those things for which men most prize themselves? And yet men despise them.’¹

‘And is this for want of claiming of rights?’ said Hugo.

‘It is so in great measure. Women have not claimed those helps from study and education which are freely given to men, but in the natural powers of the mind they are noways inferior. Indeed, the well-composedness of a woman’s judgment often moves one to envy. In my own opinion, to whatsoever they apply themselves, either learning, business, domestic or public government, they show themselves at least equal to our sex. But naught can be done till in the slow development of the ages they awake to a sense of their duties and of their rights; and until men grow purer and women more cultivated, there is but a sorry outlook for this country of ours.’

Hugo was silent, musing over the very novel ideas which had been presented to him. The doctrine of claiming of rights was little in accordance with his character or his education, while as to perceiving of duties, it had been dinned into him from his very childhood that the whole duty of man was passive obedience.

Supper was just then announced, and they went down below to the parlour.

‘But were we all to learn languages and science, and all things that make up a good education,’ said Mary Denham, ‘who would order the house, and make the preserves, and oversee the linen?’

‘And amuse the men,’ interposed Rupert.

Sydney smiled.

‘There must ever be much in either sex that the other sex cannot perform,’ he said. ‘We would not if we could turn women into she-men; all that the wise would claim is that woman be no longer treated as a toy, as an inferior, and that man no longer ape a superiority which exists merely in his own conceit. As to the linen and the preserves, why, Sir Thomas More found his chiefest comfort in a daughter who was a prodigy of learning, and I’ll warrant Mr. Roper did not find his household ill-governed.’

‘In truth,’ said Lady Denham, ‘many a maid would be glad

¹ See Algernon Sydney’s *Essay on Love*, 3

enough to learn more in these days, but, you see, the men like it not.'

Sydney laughed.

'Ay, truly they like it not, because they fear their boasted superiority would quickly be ended. Be advised by me, Mistress Mary, study science with your uncle, and lose not your chances of learning for the sake of a few gibes from Whitehall idlers.'

'Defending the cause of women, Colonel Sydney, you are not caring for your own wants,' said Lady Denham. 'Let me give you some of this red-deer pie.'

'Of my own making,' said Mary, with a little mischievous gleam in her eyes. She was a brunette with bright dark eyes, a rich glowing complexion, and brown hair curled all over her head, after the fashion of the period. Her face was sweet, pure, and slightly proud. Hugo admired her greatly. For the last two years there had existed between them a sort of Platonic friendship, an admirable thing, no doubt, for Hugo, but for the girl a doubtful experiment. She seemed, however, so much older than Hugo, though they were in truth of the same age, that no one dreamed that her friendship could possibly develop into love, and her aunt was only too glad to have Hugo as much as possible about the house, because she knew well enough that he was almost the only steady companion whom Rupert cared for.

Mary knew what no one else in the world knew—at least in Hugo's world—that he had warned the conventiclers. She had heard the whole story of his hurried run from the church to the barn, of how he had met Randolph afterwards in the church-yard just as the service was over, and had escaped without so much as a question, and of how from that day to this no allusion whatever had been made to the heretical kinsfolk down in Suffolk. She had heard more about the duel than any one else, and she had elicited a little—a very little—information about Joyce. She had a restless longing to learn more about this rescued maiden, and this evening, as they went up-stairs again after supper, she hazarded a question.

'Did Sir Peregrine say naught of fair Mistress Wharncliffe?' she asked, with a smile. 'Methinks he should at least have mentioned the cause of all the strife.'

Hugo was taken by surprise, and to say the truth had been at that very moment wondering what Joyce would think of Colonel Algernon Sydney's notions as to women. He started and coloured.

‘I saw not the letter,’ he replied, hurriedly. ‘What he may have said of her I know not, but I trust it was not much. I would not have so much as her name fall from his vile pen as it could be helped!’

Never before had she seen Hugo so visibly discomposed; with a little sigh she wondered whether he would mind at all what this Suffolk squire might happen to write about her. It did not at all trouble him apparently that she should be persecuted by the attentions of men quite as bad, doubtless, though not so unmannerly, as Sir Peregrine Blake. Her thoughts wandered back to Rupert’s description of the rescued maiden—‘devilish pretty, with blue eyes’—she wished with all her heart that her own eyes were not so hopelessly and irretrievably brown.

‘Come, Hugo,’ said Sir William; ‘you must not cheat us of a song. I hear you have a manuscript one by Mr. Purcell. What do you think, Sydney, of our young composer?’

‘He seems to be nearer to the mark of the Italian musicians than any English song-writer,’ said Sydney. ‘I hear he is organist at Westminster Abbey. Is that so?’

‘Ay, ’tis true,’ said Sir William. ‘The king also appointed him last July to the Chapel Royal. He is a fine player, and worth your hearing.’

‘Maybe,’ said Sydney. ‘But I do not affect public worship, least of all in one of the Chapels-Royal. Mr. Wharnccliffe will doubtless render his music well. He has the face of a musician.’

‘Ay, indeed,’ said Sir William, lowering his voice. ‘When a trifle older I doubt not he will have the best tenor in all London. Mary, do you accompany him on the spinet, it goes better so than with his lute.’

Rupert was lighting the candles, and Mary had already seated herself at the spinet which stood at the far end of the room. Soon the first bars of an exquisite air rang out into the silence, and then a voice, marvellously sweet and clear, sang Purcell’s new song. Never before had Mary Denham been so well satisfied with the power and expression which Hugo threw into the music; in former times she had been wont to scold him for the want of life and animation in his singing, to-night she felt instead a curious pain at her heart, as she listened to the wild words and impassioned music.

‘I attempt from love’s sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am, myself, my own fever and pain.’

No more now, fond heart, with pride should we swell,
Thou canst not raise forces enough to rebel.
I attempt from love's sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am, myself, my own fever and pain.
"For love has more power and less mercy than fate,
To make us seek ruin, and love those that hate.
I attempt from love's sickness to fly in vain,
Since I am, myself, my own fever and pain."

There was complete silence among the listeners ; Sir William wagged his foot in time to the music, Lady Denham laid aside her embroidery and sat idle, Sydney leant back in the great arm-chair beside the fire, his keen, thoughtful eyes fixed upon the singer, but rather as though he were thinking of the lad himself than of the song. He had taken a strange fancy to Hugo, strange, because in almost every point their characters were so diametrically opposite. Sydney unbending and stern, Hugo yielding and sweet-tempered ; the elder man worn with the hardships he had lived through, the younger fresh and unsullied, knowing as yet nothing of life and but little of care. Great differences often prove, however, a curious source of attraction, and in this case, for the first time in his life, Sydney thought to himself—'Had I had a son I would have had him like that !'

He had, however, neither wife nor child, most of his kinsfolk were alienated from him, and the life he had lived had, to a great extent, unfitted him for forming many friendships. Old age was not so very far off now, and its advance found him lonely and isolated, with countless foes, and but few friends on whom he could thoroughly rely. It was as Sir William had said—he was an anachronism ! Like all men who are in advance of their age—all honest and outspoken men, at least—he had met with much bitter opposition, also he had apparently failed, and that is a hard fate for one of his disposition. He had failed to do much for the country he loved so passionately, he had failed to leave his mark on his generation, he had failed in winning love, or confidence, or distinction. Watching Hugo, he fell to thinking of his own youth—his whole life rose in vision before him.

Good God ! What hopes had been his when in his nineteenth year he had first been put in command of a troop of horse ! Again, what dreams of a grand future for his country had come to him three years latter, when, the struggle between King and Parliament having begun in good earnest, he had volunteered his services in the Parliamentary army ! How sweet had been the toilsome campaign, the wounds, the

hardships illumined ever with the thought of the nation's liberties, which must be bought at any price! But victory had come with disappointment stalking at her heels.

Another scene rose before him—the painted chamber at Westminster—a number of men eagerly discussing the fate of the king—he himself full of dislike to all violence, wishing only that Charles might be deposed and banished by Act of Parliament, and in vain urging upon Cromwell and Bradshaw that the king could be tried by no Court, and that no man living could legally be tried by *that* Court. Again he saw the looks of aversion and suspicion on the faces of all present as he pleaded for his bitterest enemy, claimed justice for his country's foe. Again Cromwell's words rang in his ears—'I tell you we will cut off his head with the crown upon it!'—again he heard his own reply as he quitted the assembly never to return—'You may take your own course, I cannot stop you; but I will keep myself clean from having any hand in this business.'

The scene changed; he was at quiet Penshurst walking in the park, and one brought him word of the king's death. Illegal as he deemed the sentence, the doom had seemed to him but just. It was necessary that Charles should be reminded that by the ancient law of the land an English king receives his right to reign from the will of the people, that he had been 'therein intrusted with a limited power to govern by and according to the laws of the land, and not otherwise.' The king had broken his trust, had done his best to ruin the country, had laid upon the nation a yoke which could not be borne—certainly if treason ever merited death it was his treason. But, as civilisation develops, the question must recur again and again: Has any human being the right in any circumstances to take the life of another?

Then he wandered on through the years of disappointment which had followed, recalling Cromwell's patriotic zeal and wonderful power; recalling, too, the impossibility of working with one who, in spite of all his virtues, was no Republican, but a tyrant. Again he was in the House of Commons, and a man in plain black clothes and grey stockings was walking passionately to and fro with his hat on, upbraiding the members. He could see once more the sudden entry of the musketeers, the hurried dispersion of the members—hear once more the peremptory command to himself to come down, and on his refusal could feel again the hands of Harrison and Wortley on his shoulders as they pushed him out of his place

in the House, and in fact out of public life altogether, for five long years. Once more hopes had arisen, once more he was actively at work, carrying on negotiations between Sweden and Denmark. The Restoration had, however, dashed all his hopes to the ground, and after that there came only a vision of weary years of exile—wanderings in Germany, Italy, France, homeless, friendless, often well-nigh penniless, in constant danger of assassination, and ever with the knowledge that the country for which he had fought, and bled, and suffered was going to ruin.

Well, his exile was ended, and he was by an English hearth again, able to watch the ruin of his country yet more closely.

‘A sweet song! A charming song!’ exclaimed Lady Denham. ‘Let us have one more, Hugo. It is long since we heard you.’

Hugo sang ‘In Woodstock Town,’ and this time Sydney listened to him.

‘I have not heard such singing since I was in Rome,’ he said at the close. ‘There was at the time a tenor, Geronimo by name, who had a voice much like yours. Do you sing Italian music?’

‘I do at times to the king; it pleases him more than our English music,’ said Hugo.

Sydney’s face darkened. He made no reply, however, and shortly after the servant came to announce that Jeremiah waited below, and had brought a message to his master.

Hugo, knowing that the message was probably from his brother, hastened down. In a few minutes he returned to the withdrawing-room, evidently not much pleased with the news Jeremiah had brought him.

‘I must bid you good-night,’ he said, approaching Lady Denham. ‘The king commands my presence at Whitehall.’

‘We must see more of one another,’ said Sydney, as he bade him farewell—a speech which made every pulse in Hugo’s body beat at double time, for already Sydney had become his hero of heroes.

‘To think that such as he must go to Whitehall!’ said Sydney, when the door had closed behind him. ‘What are his people about that they permit it?’

‘It is his brother’s doings,’ said Sir William. ‘A strange man is Wharncliffe, one of the Duchess of Cleveland’s devotees. According to Hugo, that is his sole weakness, however. He is a bitter sort of fellow, but somehow the lad is mighty fond of him.’

‘And he of the lad?’

‘I scarcely know,’ said Lady Denham. ‘He is very stern with him, and at times I fancy that he really only cares for him so long as he proves useful.’

CHAPTER VI.

AT WHITEHALL.

I need not be ashamed of your Majesty, praised be Got, so long as your Majesty is an honest man.—*King Henry V.*

THE great gallery at Whitehall presented that evening its usual aspect of splendour, gaiety, and vice. It was ablaze with candles, and crowded with people, who, in their rich and gay-coloured clothes, made the place look like an immense flower-garden. Gostling, the celebrated bass, was singing a song which no modern audience would tolerate, and Signor Giovanni Baptista Draghi—dubbed for convenience’ sake ‘John Baptist’—was accompanying him on the harpsichord. A number of courtiers were sitting round a table playing at basset, with an immense pile of gold before them. The queen with two of her ladies sat apart playing her favourite game of *ombre*. A group of idlers clustered together in one corner to listen to the latest lampoon. The rest talked, jested, flirted, and made merry. The place was very hot, coming indeed from the sharp November air outside it seemed to Hugo stifling, also there was something about the moral atmosphere which always oppressed him. He was never happy at Whitehall, never in harmony with his surroundings. These people lived such a different life, thought such different thoughts, cared for such different things, that it was almost impossible to find anything in common with them, nor did he trouble himself to try much, he was too young, and at present too well satisfied with a quiet, studious, *laissez-aller* kind of life. That he owed any sort of duty to those he met did not occur to him. He went to Whitehall because it was his brother’s wish; he sang his best to please Randolph; he was quiet and courteous, because it was impossible for him to be anything but a perfect gentleman; and he never, even at home, showed his dislike to the White-

hall evenings, because he was philosophic, and was in the habit of taking things calmly. But the people he met were to him only like the puppets in a show, and puppets of whom he rather wearied. He rarely considered them as actual men and women.

In spite of this he was, strangely enough, already a favourite at the court. People liked him because he was original, not quite like all the rest of the world, fresh, and unspoilt, and void of the smallest particle of conceit. They amused themselves with seeing how he would take things, how he would dexterously avoid singing some lewd song, even when the king asked for it, how he would adroitly parry the questionable jests of the wits, how above all he adored his brother, and cared for nothing so long as he was secure of his approval.

This evening as usual it was not towards the king that he looked with any apprehension. He looked instead at Randolph to see whether he were vexed at his delay. He had it is true made all speed from Sir William Denham's, and rushed into his court dress in the space of ten minutes, and had hurried to Whitehall as fast as possible. But then there was no knowing how slow Jeremiah might have been in bringing the message, for if there was one place the old servant hated his coming to it was the court.

Randolph was standing not far from the king among a group of courtiers, idly leaning against the pedestal of a statue, and combing his periwig with a large tortoise-shell comb, a way of killing time which was then much in vogue. He looked as usual handsome, discontented, and *blasé*. Was he vexed? Hugo looked at him questioningly, and Randolph, who had long been watching for his arrival, met his gaze, scanned him from head to foot, and looked at any rate no more discontented than before. There was not the ominous contraction of the forehead which Hugo hated to cause. He breathed more freely, and advanced towards the king, following the usher. Randolph watched him critically. A tall slim graceful figure in dark-blue velvet, laced with gold, a manner devoid entirely of courtier-like subservience and adulation,—a markedly quiet manner, just escaping nonchalance, however, by a sort of inborn dignity.

Charles was seated on a sort of ottoman, lounging between two of his mistresses, on his right hand the beautiful Mrs. Gwynne, and on his left the Duchess of Cleveland, one of the most depraved women of the time. Hugo came as near to

hating her as he was capable of hating anybody ; he loathed the thought that she held Randolph in bondage, loathed the thought that he was but one of her innumerable slaves, and if he made light of the matter to old Jeremiah it was not because he thought lightly of it.

‘You are late, Mr. Wharncliffe,’ said Charles, with a good-natured smile, extending his hand, which the young Templar knelt to kiss.

‘Sire,’ replied Hugo, ‘I made all speed on receiving your gracious message, but I was absent when it arrived.’

‘Making merry with the rioters in Fleet Street, I’ll be bound!’ said Charles, laughing. ‘Was it not so, eh?’

‘No, my liege, I was at Sir William Denham’s.’

‘What! he that is a member of the Royal Society? I remember him ; a learned man, and methinks he has a pretty niece, who is a notable heiress. I have torn him away, you see,’ turning to the Duchess of Cleveland, ‘from much more agreeable society! Was the fair maiden wroth with me?’

‘Your Majesty is wholly mistaken,’ said Hugo, colouring.

‘What! can you deny that you were sorry to leave?’ said the king, laughing at his face of embarrassment.

‘There was in truth a guest of whom I would fain have seen more,’ said Hugo, with the transparent honesty which made him so refreshing.

‘Who was that? Let us hear all about her. A blonde or a brunette?’

‘It was no lady, your Majesty, it was merely a friend of Sir William Denham’s.’

‘I must know the name of my rival, whose presence was more to be desired than an evening at my court.’

Hugo looked troubled.

‘His name, sire, was Colonel Sydney,’ he replied, after a brief pause.

The king started.

‘Upon my soul! young man,’ he exclaimed, ‘you are very bold to mention that man in my presence.’

‘It was at your Majesty’s request,’ said Hugo, respectfully, but with a sort of grave dignity.

Charles smiled.

‘’Tis true, and I like you better for not being an adept at lying yet awhile. After all, there’s something *naïve* in an honest man now-a-days. There! a jest for you ladies! When does an honest man become a knave? When honesty is so old-fashioned that it has a *naïve* appearance.’

He grew thoughtful for a minute, and the lines in his hard-featured face deepened, while he toyed absently with three spaniel puppies on his knee.

‘And so you would fain have seen more of Colonel Sydney?’ he said, looking curiously at the young Templar.

‘Yes, your Majesty,’ replied Hugo, lifting his quiet grey eyes to the king’s.

‘And why, pray?’

‘He seemed to me a man of great power, a very noble man, my liege.’

‘Are you aware that he is one of the most dangerous men in the country? That he took a leading part in the Rebellion? That he would fain establish a gloomy Republic in this merry England of ours?’

‘Sire,’ said Hugo, rendered uneasy by the consciousness that Randolph was listening disapprovingly to every word he uttered, yet sturdily determined that nothing should make him false to Sydney,—‘Sire, I know very little of such matters, but one thing I cannot doubt, and that is, that be his views what they may, Colonel Sydney is a noble gentleman.’

‘There is not another man in all England who would have the courage to tell me that to my face,’ said Charles, musing. ‘Well, lad, I would have you be truer to me than Colonel Sydney has been, for i’ faith I have but few followers so brave and outspoken. But enough of this,—go sing me one of your songs.’

Hugo obeyed, feeling thankful enough to have the conversation ended. It is not the easiest thing in the world to speak out bravely in defence of an unpopular person, and to incur Randolph’s displeasure was always keenly painful to Hugo. With a very heavy heart, which could in no wise be elated by the king’s compliment, he crossed over to the harpsichord, and handed his song to Signor ‘John Baptist,’ who was to accompany him. The same song which but an hour ago he had sung at the Denhams’ house, to how different an assembly! He sang several times and was warmly applauded. After his last song he looked round apprehensively for his brother, but Randolph had disappeared, and the king, too, was nowhere to be seen.

Could he have looked into the adjoining chamber, where Charles was in the habit of receiving those who desired private interviews, he would have seen his sovereign and his guardian deep in conversation, laying a scheme which was to cost him dear.

'You say the lad is absolutely obedient, that you could trust him with anything?'

'Absolutely, your Majesty. I have trained him to be of use, and to serve my ends. He will not question aught that I bid him do.'

'Then, if that is so, it were no bad plan that he should learn to know this traitor; I hear he has great influence with young men. Let him get hand and glove with him, trusted with his secrets and so forth, and then when the right time comes do you make him reveal all to yourself. You think you can do this?'

'I am certain of it, my liege.'

'You are very much more confident than I am,' said the king, thoughtfully. 'He seemed to me just now by no means so docile and yielding as you deem him.'

'Your Majesty will pardon his awkwardness, that was but his lack of court training.'

'In dishonesty,' said the king, with a sarcastic smile.

'Moreover,' continued Randolph, stung by his remark, 'it is possible, if your Majesty will pardon my saying such a thing, that he would reveal to myself what he would not reveal to your Majesty.'

'Which in plain English means that you are the greater bully. Well, I willingly concede you the palm!'

He laughed: Randolph smiled a mechanical court smile.

'Of course it rests with you, my liege. If it will further your ends, I will gladly let the boy associate with Colonel Sydney; all we desire is to be of service to your Majesty.'

'Then be it so,' said the king. 'Let us lay this attractive net for my enemy.'

They returned to the gallery; the king looked a little regretfully at Hugo, who was to be made an unconscious tool, and used for work which he would abhor. But in another minute he had forgotten all about the matter, and was jesting with the beautiful and witty Duchess of Mazarine, who was at that time high in his favour.

Randolph, after a moment's consideration, made his way to the place where Hugo was standing, apparently listening to Gostling's song, but in reality absorbed in his own thoughts.

'Take a turn with me,' said Randolph, 'I have a word to say to you.'

Under cover of the music, and the general roar of conversation, which was not much abated even by the singing of

the celebrated bass, the two brothers paced the gallery, practically as much in private as in their own chambers.

‘You managed well just now,’ began Randolph. ‘I feared that you would ruin your reputation with the king, but luckily for you he took all in good part.’

Hugo was much relieved, he had expected something very different from Randolph.

His brother continued—

‘You have done very well indeed, I felt proud of you. Honesty is at times the best policy, there is no question of that. But just one word of caution. I don’t object to your following up the acquaintance which you have made to-night at the Denhams’, only mention not that unpopular name more than need be. You only harm both yourself and him by bringing his name into notice. Do you understand?’

‘Ay,’ said Hugo. ‘I will be careful. And you do not indeed object to my meeting him again? He said he must see more of me, and I would fain know him better, for indeed, sir, he is a great man, the greatest man I ever met.’

Randolph smiled good-naturedly.

‘Well, well, have a care. Sing his praises to me as much as you will, but to the world without hold your tongue. I doubt not he is an able man, he has travelled much, and knows the world.’

‘Who is that beautiful girl standing near the harpsichord?’ asked Hugo, diverted from all thoughts of Sydney by a face which somehow reminded him of Joyce.

‘Her in rose-coloured satin, mean you? That is the little Duchess of Grafton, Lord Arlington’s daughter.’

‘What, is she married already?’

‘Ay, she was married at five years old, and re-married at twelve to one of his Majesty’s sons. I’ll get her mother-in-law to introduce you to her.’

Hugo could not make any objection, though it seemed to him a sort of sacrilege to owe an introduction to such a girl to the favour of such a woman.

‘They will just suit each other,’ said the Duchess of Cleveland, when Randolph had preferred his request. ‘The two court innocents! I marvel they had not become acquainted long since. My love,’ turning to the young girl who was standing close by her, and had already coloured deeply at the disagreeable bantering tone. ‘My love, let me introduce you to Mr. Hugo Wharnccliffe, a paragon of virtue I assure you.’

The girl curtsied, Hugo bowed low; they were both of

them too young not to be a good deal discomposed by this uncomfortable introduction ; Hugo almost fancied he saw tears in the eyes of the little duchess, and this made him quickly recover his equanimity that he might come to her rescue.

‘Signor John Baptist is a skilful player, is he not?’ he remarked. ‘I have not heard him before this evening.’

She looked grateful to him for promptly starting so easy a topic.

‘In truth,’ she said, glancing round to see that her mother-in-law was safely out of hearing, ‘the music is the sole thing that makes this place tolerable. I love not Whitehall, and you, methinks, agree with me in that disloyal sentiment.’

She smiled, with a mixture of humour and pathos which enchanted him.

‘And yet,’ said Hugo, meditatively, ‘’twould scarcely do to live only among one’s books. I should have lost much indeed this night had not my friend Denham ruthlessly carried me off.’

‘Is that a kinsman of Mistress Mary Denham?’

‘It is her cousin.’

‘I know Mistress Mary Denham well, and methinks I have heard her mention you. Are you not he who found for Sir William Denham that rare plant of which he wanted a specimen?’

‘We chanced upon it in Suffolk, a few weeks since,’ said Hugo, ‘returning from the Newmarket races. But indeed it is as much due to Rupert Denham as to me, for he found it a second time when I had lost it.’

The little duchess looked at him with a pleased look. She had heard the whole story, and knew that the plant had been lost because the elder brother had snatched it away in a passion and thrown it into a wayside copse. She liked him greatly for keeping silence about that part of the matter.

‘Mr. Evelyn told me once that the king has in his library a curious book on botany with rare coloured plates. Would you care to see it?’

‘I should like it greatly, if it were possible,’ said Hugo. ‘But I could not ask any favour of the king to-night.’

‘But I will ask ; it will give him pleasure, for he is always pleased to see his subjects lovers of science. See ! he is at liberty now, I will ask his permission.’

She walked gracefully towards the king and made her request, to which he at once acceded, but as usual could not forbear making one of his jests.

‘Go, by all means ; one of the ushers will show you the

way. And we won't say anything of a duenna, since he is such a handsome spark. Odds fish! she blushes like a carnation! art in love with the young scapegrace already, I'll be bound.'

But the prudent little duchess had learnt enough of the world to take very good care that a staid old court lady accompanied them when they left the gallery, with the usher in advance to pilot them through the maze of rooms and passages. The man bore a lamp which dimly revealed to them the costly furniture and the rich hangings of the rooms through which they passed. It was not, however, till an exclamation escaped Hugo that they paused in their onward way.

'Oh!' he cried. 'Bring the light nearer, sir, an you will. What is this beautiful picture?'

They were in a room which was filled with all kinds of curious clocks, watches, and pendules, Charles being fond of all clever mechanism; there were also several beautiful pictures, and Hugo had paused before one representing the appearance of our Lord after His Resurrection to Mary Magdalene.

'Tis the "*Noli me tangere*" of Hans Holbein,' said the usher, 'and worth any money, they say.'

He went on talking and criticising, but luckily addressed all his remarks to the duenna; as for Hugo and the little duchess, they could neither of them have spoken, for the unspeakable reverence, the sort of heavenly astonishment expressed in the picture, seemed to have taken possession of them. In that silence somehow they learnt to know each other; they had begun, though they did not know it, a life-long friendship.

'This is the library,' said the usher, flinging open a door close by.

They entered, and found what for that age was a large collection of books, numbering perhaps a thousand volumes. Some of them were richly bound, and embossed with gold, but the particular book which they had come to see was in manuscript, a great quarto over three hundred years old, and written in French. The plants were most curiously painted in miniature, and Hugo was delighted to have an opportunity of going through them, while the little duchess, though only fifteen, displayed so much intelligence, and such an eagerness to learn from him all that he could tell her, that she doubled his pleasure.

'You must come and see me,' she said to him, when they parted, 'at my father's house. Then some day you must be

introduced to Mr. Evelyn, who often comes there. He would like to know you, I feel sure, and I ever long for all whom I like to know him, for he is so learned and so good.'

Thus ended what had proved for Hugo an eventful evening.

CHAPTER VII.

JOYCE'S JOURNAL.

Sometimes hath the brightest day a cloud ;
 And after summer evermore succeeds
 Barren winter, with its wrathful nipping cold ;
 So cares and joys abound as seasons fleet.—SHAKESPEARE.

I, JOYCE WHARNCLIFFE, have determined for three reasons to write down from time to time what I can remember of our life at Mondisfield. The first of these reasons is that things are really beginning to happen so fast,—and we never believed till now that anything would happen, only that each day would go on much like the one before, with Sundays to keep us from getting too monotonous. The second reason is, that since the fifth of October, when the duel was fought outside the park, Evelyn and I have felt dull somehow, and as if just the first seeing of that bad man, and the seeing of how our brave 'knight' fought with him, had made it quite impossible for us to go back to our old ways, fancying stories, and acting people's lives in our own. Somehow, things got real to us on that Saturday afternoon, and then the Sunday following, when the congregation had to disperse all in haste, and when we were in terror lest our dear father should be arrested, that made life seem still more real.

It puzzles me a little that, though it has at last begun to feel so very real to me, yet I do not like a bit better to be what Elizabeth calls 'useful in the house.' The books will seem still to be more real than the puddings, and the preserves, and the dairy-work, and the needle-work. I said so to Elizabeth to-day, but dear Betty, though she is so wise, does not seem to understand at all what books do for one. She came to me in the north parlour, and said—

'Oh, Joyce, I wish you wouldn't idle away your time with vain poems and plays.'

I was reading Shakespere's story of *Romeo and Juliet*. It was a pity it was not one of his historical plays, because that would have been easier to argue from, and certainly it did seem, perhaps, a little wasting time to be reading a love-tale. I read it because it seemed to me that Romeo might have been like our knight—he did fight two duels, and he was young, and brave, and handsome.

'But,' I said to Betty, 'it gives one so many thoughts to read books, and that makes one happy. Whereas, to make puddings and preserves gives one no thoughts at all.'

'No thoughts!' cried Betty. 'No thoughts in making a pudding. Why, you have to keep thinking all the time.'

'You have to keep worrying. "Have I put enough sugar? Is there too much dough? Will it be heavy? How long must it boil?"' I said, laughing. 'But I don't call that thinking.'

'I call it thinking to some purpose,' said Betty, with that vexed look which she always has when I say what she thinks unpractical things. 'Who is the better for your reading of books, and your thinking of thoughts that have nothing to do with the house, or with anything that is of use?'

I was silenced by that. For, when one comes to think of it, who is the better for it because I read Mr. Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or *Romeo and Juliet*, or *The Tempest*, or even graver books?

'What have you to show for this whole hour that you have been reading?' she went on. 'Whereas, if you had been busy in the kitchen, you might have had a pile of manchets ready for the morrow, or you might have made girdle-cakes for every one's supper.'

I only felt that I *had* got something from the reading, but whether it was a thing which could be shown definitely, like a manchet or a girdle-cake, I was doubtful. Yet it was to me, after all, more real than either.

'It makes the world feel bigger when one reads,' I said at last. 'It makes you see how little you know, and what a great number of things there are to know. And, oh! Betty!'—I could have danced with delight at having at length got hold of the right argument—'your pudding is made, and eaten, and there's an end of it; but the book is read, and stays always, and makes one happy, and teaches one things, and there's never any end to it.'

'It is selfish,' said Betty. 'For you see it is only yourself that is made better, after all. Whereas the pudding would

have been for every one's dinner, and the manchets for every one's breakfast, and the girdle-cakes for every one's supper.'

This seemed to me unanswerable. I felt very unhappy. Could it be wrong to read? If so, why did so many great and good people write books?

Father had been tying up a climbing rose just by the window, and he must have heard what we were saying, for just then he came in.

'You foolish children!' he said. 'One of you talks as if you were all body and no mind, and the other as though you were all mind and no body. Books, Betty, are food for the mind, and it is no more selfish to spend time over reading them than to spend time in eating, sleeping, and walking for the good of your body. Nay, it is quite as wrong, perhaps more wrong, to neglect the feeding of your mind as to neglect the healthful keeping of your body. The stronger and better fed the mind, the more use will it be to other people, sooner or later. As for you, my little Joy,' he said, putting his hand on my head, 'you will be a wise maid, and let no day pass without doing something in the house to help your mother. For, look you, what would come to us all if Betty were to marry? Or how would you order your husband's house, if you knew naught of housewifery?'

I have written this all down, even our silly talk, because I wanted always to remember what my father said. I shall think of it always when I mind being called away to the kitchen, but, somehow, I don't think I shall mind again.

Would Juliet have managed her husband's house well, I wonder, if her story had not ended so sadly? She was just as old as I am.

I have been a long time coming to my third reason for writing our recollections. The third reason is that a dreadful thought has come to me, or rather was given to me by my father—that perhaps Mondisfield might not long be ours. How I came to hear about it was in this way. The others were all in the orchard at the apple-gathering. I was to go too, but had not quite finished my morning's spinning. The spinning is the house-work I mind doing least. It is not at all sticky and greasy, like the cakes and puddings, and you need not keep worrying about it like other kinds of work; it is a sort of steady going on, just as monotonous as the whirr of the wheel, and I like it because one can think about other things at the same time. Nurse had let me take my spinning-wheel into the musicians' gallery, which has always been my

own special part of the house. It is only used by other people once a year, though in old times, they say, the musicians played every evening while the family were at supper, and often there were dances. We do not often dance, father's friends mostly think it wrong. But he likes us to dance by ourselves, and once a year—that is on the twelfth of May, which is his birthday, and Elizabeth's too—we have a great festival day, and real musicians come from St. Edmondsbury, and we have songs, and country-dances, and a dinner for all the tenants. Some people wonder at father for doing this, but he says that all extremes are bad, and that, perchance, had the Commonwealth been less strict about the amusements, the people would not have been so eager to get back the king and his wicked court. And once I even heard him tell a grave and learned minister that so long as the hundred and fiftieth psalm found place in the Bible, his daughters should enjoy both timbrel and dance in moderation, only he would ever have an eye to the company they mixed with.

Well, I was sitting with my spinning-wheel in the old gallery, when all at once, above the whirr, I heard a sharp sound as of something snapping asunder. Looking across to the other end of the hall, where the sound came from, I saw that the picture of the little boy with the dog, which hangs high up above the north parlour door, and exactly facing my gallery, was falling down. The string had snapped, and I could do nothing—nothing but just watch it, as it fell to the ground, making a great crash on the white flagstones. When it was down, I ran out of the gallery, through the little room beyond, and down the steep little staircase, then hurried out beyond the screen, and through the hall till I had reached the picture.

Its frame was badly broken, and in many places the gold had chipped off, but the portrait itself was not hurt. I looked at it curiously, for it was too small a picture to be seen very well at a distance, and my idea of the little boy had been always somewhat vague. I do not know why, but as a little girl I well remember having a strange terror of this picture. It always seemed to be looking at me, and on dusk evenings in summer, or, worse still, on dark nights in winter, by the dim lamplight, I used to rush through the hall, on my way to bed, absolutely trembling at the thought of those eyes which would follow me. That, of course, was long ago. I almost laughed at the thought now, for on a nearer and soberer view it was such a harmless sort of picture. A little innocent,

dark-eyed babe of two or three years, in a tight white cap, a long white pinner, and bishop sleeves. In one hand it grasped a rattle, with the other it patted a little spaniel. The whole attitude was stiff and quaint—indeed, it was hard to tell whether he were sitting, or standing, or leaning. Once more I turned the picture over as it had fallen. On the back of the canvas was painted a name in large black characters,

‘Hugo Wharncliffe,’

and down below, written in my father’s writing,—‘This picture was saved from the Great Fire of London, in the year of grace 1666.’

Who was Hugo Wharncliffe? Had we ever had a brother of whom I had never heard? That seemed scarcely possible. As I wondered, my father passed through the hall, and, seeing that the picture had fallen, came to see how far it was injured.

‘Father,’ I said, ‘who is this boy? Who is Hugo Wharncliffe? Had we ever a brother?’

‘Never, my child,’ he replied, sadly. ‘This is the portrait of a very distant kinsman of yours, brother to him who is heir-at-law, and will at my death take possession of this house.’

My heart almost stopped beating.

‘What!’ I cried, ‘will Mondisfield belong to us no more? I thought it was ours for always.’

My father smiled, and explained to me that, as he had no son, the property went to the next male, one Randolph Wharncliffe.

‘But how came you by this picture, then?’ I asked.

‘That,’ said my father, ‘is a long story; however, you shall hear it. I loved this lad’s mother well; she was a noble lady, and would have brought up her son virtuously had she lived. She died, poor lady, in the plague year; out of the whole household were left but three—Randolph, the eldest, a young man of two-and-twenty, this little lad here, whose portrait was scarce finished, and yet in the artist’s hands at the time, and one servant. Being in London in the August of the year following, when the pestilence was somewhat abated, I was one day waited on by the artist, who, hearing that I was head of the Wharncliffe family, called to explain to me how matters were with regard to this picture. It had been ordered, it seems, by the little lad’s mother, who

was since dead; the brother would not take the picture, or pay anything towards the expense, saying merely he had not ordered it. To argue with him was of no avail, and sooner than have our name dishonoured, I paid the artist myself, and brought the picture to my rooms in the city. That day se'nnight broke out the great fire, and how I escaped with all my goods you have oftentimes heard. I wrote it on the back of the canvas, as you see, so that this lad's descendants may prize the picture accordingly as a relic.'

'His descendants!' I exclaimed. 'Oh, father, I ever thought we should live here, and after that our children, not other people's.'

'It cannot be, little Joy. And, after all, why should we look to the future? Set your heart on nothing, child; for indeed it is well if I hold this place through my lifetime. Randolph Wharnccliffe, they tell me, hath great influence at court, and he accounts me his bitterest foe.'

'You, father! How can he make a foe of you?' I said, looking up into his grave, quiet, strong face. How, indeed, could any one help loving and revering him?

'It is in this way, child,' said my father. 'He is one of the Sussex Wharncliffes, and lost his estates, or rather his father lost his estates, in the time of the civil war. These he has never recovered, though he would fain have done so at the Restoration. Can you not understand, then, that it is bitter for him to see one of the Suffolk Wharncliffes, who fought against the late king, still peacefully enjoying his property? Could he get rid of me, he would, you see, come into this estate at once. And, Joyce, these are evil times, and I hold unpopular opinions. You must not set your heart, dear child, on a quiet life here.'

I looked at the innocent little babe in the picture, and wondered what this unknown kinsman of mine would be like now.

'Would this cousin be your enemy too?' I asked, after a pause.

'He would certainly hold his brother's views of the matter,' said my father. ''Tis many years since I saw him, but I remember well that he was like the little shadow of his brother, following him everywhere, and obeying him most implicitly. It was most touching, I remember, to notice his devotion to one who treated him but roughly. Poor lad! he stands a bad chance with such a training.'

'Does he, too, go to the court?' I asked.

'I should think it very probable,' said my father ; and with that he went away, to leave me a new subject for day-dreams. Evelyn and I talked about it almost all the afternoon, while we gathered the apples. Evelyn and I always go together, though she is six years younger, and Robina comes in betwixt us. But Robina, all say, should have been a boy. She is now just fourteen, and as tall as I am, and her wrists much stronger. She loves to be ever out of doors ; in the farm-yard among the poultry and the pigs and the cows. And she will spend hours in the warren with the conies, who do not fear her ; and the deer in the park will let her stroke them, though if any one else draw near they rush off like the wind. Robina is much more clever than I am, and seems older altogether, and never cares for other people to look after her, but will ever be independent. She wishes much she had been a boy, chiefly because she would not then have been forced to wear long skirts, which certainly do get in one's way not a little. The only play of Shakespere's that I can ever make her hearken to is *Cymbeline*, and she cares not for that till it comes to the part where Imogen dons 'doublet, hat, hose,' and says she is 'almost a man already.' All which Betty thinks mighty improper, but Evelyn and I think we would have done harder things than that to win back our husband's trust, and, anyhow, it seemed better than staying at the court to die of a broken heart.

The day that the picture fell, when we had finished the apple-gathering for that afternoon, some of us shaking the branches while Nurse stood below to catch the apples, or else all holding a big cloth below, while Hurst climbed into the trees, and dropped them softly down so that they might not be bruised—when all was done, Evelyn and I stayed, walking up and down the apple-walk, which is quite our favourite part of the garden. To begin with, it is quiet, and people do not come there often, for it lies at the further side of the vegetable-garden, and is walled off from the bowling-green. At the end is the pigeon-cote, with its red-tiled roof and weather-vane, and the dear, soft, blue-grey pigeons flying and whirring about overhead. Then, too, the prettiest part of the moat is just in this place. It takes a great sweeping curve just beyond the pigeon-cote, and on the further bank the fir-trees are closer and taller than elsewhere, and other trees mingle with them ; and, indeed, the wood is so thick just there, that we always call it the wilderness. After that great beautiful curve, the moat is straight for a long way—the whole length of the

apple-walk, which stretches alongside of it, a broad grassy walk, with one side sloping down to the water and shaded by the dear old apple-trees. Evelyn and I always fancy that the monks must have walked up and down this path. For in old times Mondisfield was a monastery, and had a chapel belonging to it, which was built close to our north parlour. And the abbot of St. Edmondsbury used to be fond of staying here.

It was while walking up and down the apple-walk that day that we decided to write down what happens. I am to write because my writing is easier to read, but Evelyn will help me to remember things, and we shall do it on rainy days. We do it for the sake of those other children who one day, hundreds of years hence perhaps, will live in our dear old home.

We are a big household. There are father and mother; Betty, who is nearly one-and-twenty, and has a dear kind face, and clever hands which can make all things from shirts to sack posset; Damaris, who is tall and rosy, and learns Latin and can even write poetry, yet is skilful at embroidery too; Frances, who is something like Betty, and who I think has never done one wrong thing all her life, yet is the kindest of all to us when we have done wrong; Joyce, the one who writes this record; Robina, who has been afore described, and dear Evelyn our pet, the youngest of all. Then there is Nurse who has lived with us all our lives, and Kezia the cook, and Tabitha her daughter, my mother's maid, and Dennis the serving-man, and Hurst the gardener, and Melchizideck the coachman, beside the farm labourers who live in the cottages near by. Evelyn says I have not described myself, and that the 'descendants' of the Randolph Wharnclyffes will not know what I am like. But of course there is the picture of me in the north parlour, which will perhaps still hang there, that picture which amuses us all so much. It was our grandmother who had it painted when once I stayed with her at St. Edmondsbury, nearly six years ago. I am sitting in a beautiful landscape in a pale green satin dress (a dress which was never mine at all), and my curls are smoother than they ever could have been, and everything about me most neat and proper, with never a crease or a crumple, while with one hand I caress a meeker lamb than ever lived, with a wreath of flowers round his neck. Our grandmother had the picture painted for her, and when she died it was brought here. Therefore the 'descendants' can certainly need no more description. * There is one other person whom I would have

liked to describe, and that is mother. I have tried but it is of no use, it all had to be scratched out. Somehow I almost doubt if even Mr. Milton could have described his own mother. There are some things will not go into words, though we try ever so much to make them.

Writing this, in the window-seat of our great nursery, and looking first out of doors at the quiet garden and across the moat to the broad elm-tree avenue, and again beyond that to the wooded hill in the distance, with all the trees so golden and glorious, I can scarcely believe that troubles can seek us out in this dear quiet home of ours. Within is Nurse, looking through a great basket full of hose—warm woollen hose for winter wear, and Evelyn on her little stool sits reading Mr. Bunyan's story of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, for the hundredth time, and eating a Perry pippin. Mother has just come in with a bunch of fresh-gathered lavender, which we are to make up into bags for the linen-chest, therefore I shall write no more of our recollections at present. Robina and Damaris come in eating apples,—we all eat apples in these autumn days, Robina owns to ten this afternoon! Will the children who will live here in the future live the life we live? Will they wander about in the sunny autumn days, gathering golden pippins, and golden preinettes, and Perry pippins? Will they too pace to and fro under the dear old trees in the apple-walk? And will they love Mondisfield as dearly as we love it now?

CHAPTER VIII.

MARY DENHAM'S COUNSEL.

He that hath love and judgment too
Sees more than any other doo.—MATTHEW ROYDON.

HUGO was naturally one of those who, by virtue of a yielding disposition and an absorption in intellectual pursuits, are somewhat averse to politics. Until he met Algernon Sydney the affairs of the nation had troubled him not at all; he had thought as little about them as any one in England. But the general interest in political events was growing so keen and strong that it was no longer possible for him to remain in-

different. As usual the events of the times were represented in the games played by the children. In the days of the disputes between Charles I. and the Parliament, the children had played at 'Cross-purposes.' At the Restoration a new game had been introduced—'I love my love with an A, &c.' At the present time another game had superseded this. The light frivolity of the Restoration days had become overshadowed by the intolerance which made Protestants persecute Romanists, Churchmen persecute Nonconformists, and Tories do all in their power to silence Whigs. Accordingly the children began to travesty the state of things they saw in the world around, and introduced the game of—'Neighbour, I've come to torment you ; do as I do.' This again was in its turn to be replaced in the days of the Revolution, when all sorts and conditions of men were changing places, by 'Puss in the corner.'

As even in their sports the children seemed to be aware of the events which agitated the outer world, so in the quiet of his life of study Hugo could not fail to be aware of the great national struggle which was going on, nor could he fail to take interest in it. Life seemed to grow bigger to him, and he became growingly conscious, as Joyce over her books had become conscious, that he knew very little, and that there was much to know. It is a wonderful time for all of us when we first begin to take keen interest in matters outside our own small circle, when, having been duly crammed and unduly disgusted with history in our school days, we wake up one happy morning to find that there is a living history which can be daily and hourly studied—a history in which we all have our share, our infinitesimal yet priceless share of influence and responsibility.

The autumn had been to him a very happy one. He was fascinated by Sydney, whom he had now met several times. He was as yet only in that pleasant border-land where, with suspended judgment and ready observation, it is our part to listen and learn and study and hold our tongues. Happy nineteen ! when it is a duty, a positive duty to keep our opinions to ourselves, or when questioned to put them forth with all due modesty and confession of ignorance, not confidently as in later days, when the time for action has come and a man must have the courage of his opinions, and be ready if need be to pain his dearest friends, or else become a mere cypher, forfeiting his goodly birthright.

Westminster Hall had in those days a row of bookstalls, and at one or another of these Hugo would frequently pause on

his way to or from the courts. One day early in December he had parted with Denham, who by no means shared his bookish tendencies, and in his student's cap and long black gown was standing at his favourite stall scanning the titles of the books, and now and again taking up some volume which had for him a special attraction.

The bookseller, a little shrivelled man with a great gift of persuasiveness, was crying up his own wares with an entire lack of false modesty and a great many adjectives.

'The finest work, sir, of the year, I assure you, a mighty fine poem, second in number, but not second in quality, to its immortal, far-renowned, majestical predecessor. The greater part Mr. Dryden's own work, sir, I assure you.'

Hugo took up the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, and glanced through it. As he did so he was startled by a sudden greeting from Randolph.

'What have you there? Dryden's last? Oh, Tate and Dryden mixed, is it not! Sounds less familiar than Tate and Brady.'

'Have you read the poem?' asked Hugo.

'No, but all the world talks of it, when they are not talking of Captain Clifford and Mrs. Synderfin, or of Lord Gray and Lady Henrietta. We had best buy it, for I hear there is an allusion to a friend of ours, or at least an acquaintance.'

He paid for the book, and putting his arm within Hugo's, walked down Westminster Hall, and crossing Palace Yard, led the way towards the landing-stairs. It was not the least happiness of this memorable autumn that Randolph had grown so much less severe, and treated him so much more as a friend and an equal. Hugo, being what he was, never dreamed of taking the slightest advantage of the change; if possible he treated his guardian with greater deference than ever.

They took a boat to the Temple stairs, and as they glided along the crowded river, passing hundreds of boats and barges all gilded with the ruddy gold light of the setting sun, Randolph opened the new book and searched for the allusion to this mysterious acquaintance.

'Ha! I have it at last!' he exclaimed. 'Now carry your thoughts back to Mondisfield Hall on the night of the fifth October and hearken to this—

"Next these, a troop of busy spirits press,
Of little fortunes and of conscience less:
With them the tribe, whose luxury had drained
Their banks, in former sequestrations gained:

Who rich and great by past rebellions grew,
 And long to fish the troubled streams anew.
 Some future hopes, some present payment draws,
 To sell their conscience and espouse the cause :
 Such stipends those vile hirelings best befit,
 Priests without grace, and poets without wit.
 Shall that false Hebronite escape our curse,
 Judas, that keeps the rebel's pension purse :
 Judas, that pays the treason-writer's fee :
 Judas, that well deserves his namesake's tree :
 Who at Jerusalem's own gates erects
 His college for a nursery of the sects."

That is fine, and pure Dryden unalloyed by Tate, I dare swear.
 How now? do you grasp its meaning?"

Hugo had done his best to forget that night at Mondisfield Hall, and was by no means grateful to Randolph for reminding him of it.

'I see not whom he means by Judas,' he replied, looking far away to the west where the river flowed calmly on between the houses and the green gardens to the peaceful country, reflecting on its calm surface the image of the crimson skies.

'Cannot you call to mind the man who was spokesman on that occasion? A hideous, lantern-jawed fellow, red and ill-favoured. That was Ferguson, a devil incarnate, and the one whom Mr. Dryden has justly painted as Judas. A pestilent treason-monger who bears a charmed life. He had at one time a training school for those who would enter the ministry.'

'I mind his face well,' said Hugo. 'He was the ill-looking one of the lot.'

'Forget him not, but bear his face ever in mind. That knowledge may prove useful some day,' said Randolph, turning over the leaves of the book.

Hugo made no reply, only a vague sense of discomfort crept over him. He fell into a reverie.

"The good old cause revived, a plot requires,
 Plots true or false are necessary things
 To raise up commonwealths and ruin kings,"

said Randolph, half aloud. Then again, after an interval—

"Achitophel still wants a chief, and none
 Was found so fit as warlike Absalom."

No, this latter poem is not so fine as that earlier. 'Twas a wonderful parallel to Shaftesbury and the Duke of Monmouth. Old Dryden has read his Bible to some purpose. This poem

fills up some gaps in the other, but 'twill never have such influence.'

By this time the boat had reached the landing-place, and the two brothers separated, Randolph to go to his favourite coffee-house, Hugo to go to his chambers to doff his student's cap and gown for the cloak, sword, and broad-brimmed hat which he wore in ordinary life. That reference to Mondisfield Hall had put him into a state of internal tumult which, with all his philosophy and all his easy temper, he could not quell. That he might some day be called upon to make use of the information obtained on that October night was, whenever it occurred to him, a haunting dread. He had a great faculty for dismissing all thoughts of disagreeable matters, but every now and then this skeleton in his cupboard would disturb his peace. On this December afternoon, he could not quiet it. To read was impossible; the silence of the chambers in King's Bench Walk was intolerable to him. He at length resolved to go to his usual haven of refuge, the Denhams' house in Norfolk Street. If any one could exorcise the troublesome fiend, it would be Mary Denham; and fate was kind to him, for Sir William was asleep on a couch at the far end of the withdrawing-room, and Mary sat by the hearth with her needle-work, ready to charm away his melancholy.

'Stir the fire into a blaze,' she said. 'The light is growing dim, and methinks there is something in your face to be read. What has happened?'

'Naught has happened - naught of any note, that is,' he replied, taking very good care to stir the fire gently, lest Sir William should awake. 'I have just been reading the new part of *Absalom and Achitophel*.'

'Has that made you so melancholy? For my part, whether agreeing with it or not, I could not help enjoying it. 'Tis a wondrous satire.'

Hugo made no reply; he seemed to have fallen into a reverie. That he should show so slight an interest in the new poem was strange, and Mary, who knew him better than any one in the world, felt certain that he had something weighing on his mind. Was he thinking of that blue-eyed Suffolk maiden? she wondered; and, with a little sigh, acknowledged to herself that it was very probable. If only he would have taken her into his confidence, she could have borne it so much better! And, after all, had they not known each other far too long to let foolish ceremony stand between them? There was a chance, too, that she might be able to help him, at any rate to cheer

him, and her love to Hugo was too deep to admit of selfish considerations coming in to hinder her. She had suffered much during the last few weeks, but this made her only the more anxious that he should be happy in his love. It was of his happiness that she thought—her own was a secondary matter. Therefore there could be no jealousy in her love. She loved already this unknown 'Joyce,' just because she knew that he loved her.

'Hugo,' she said, after some minutes had passed in silence, 'you did not come hither to stare into the fire, you came to talk to me.'

'How did you know that?' he exclaimed, looking up with a startled face.

'You had "I want to talk with some one" writ in plain characters on your forehead,' she said, smiling. 'And the older and wiser part of the family is either out or asleep, you see. Talk to me, Hugo; tell me what troubles you.'

Her manner was irresistible.

'It is just that I can speak of it to no one that troubles me,' he replied, looking up to her clear, sympathising eyes. 'It is merely a dread—a dread that haunts me at times.'

'And it has haunted you since the fifth day of last October?' she said softly, thinking of the duel and of fair Joyce Wharncliffe.

Hugo turned ashy pale.

'How can you possibly know?' he cried. 'Who has told you?'

'No one told me, yet, nevertheless, I know,' said Mary, quietly. 'You love Mistress Joyce Wharncliffe, and you fear that you may never see her more.'

'I shall never see her more, 'tis true'—his face softened. 'I love her; that also is true.'

He paused. Mary's hands trembled slightly; she was obliged to let her needle-work fall, and clasp her hands together. That was the only sign of agitation which escaped her, and afterwards she was even more quiet in manner than usual, sitting there in her high-backed chair by the hearth, with her hands folded in her lap, and her calm eyes watching Hugo's face.

'How did you find this out?' said Hugo at length. 'You are a witch, Mary, to read a man's private thoughts and innermost heart.'

'A very bad compliment for my sympathetic penetration,' she said, smiling. 'I have no desire to try the ducking-stool!

But, as I tell you, you bear things writ on your forehead, and I could not help knowing—or rather feeling almost sure.'

'Oh, Mary,' he exclaimed, 'if you could but see her! She is so fresh and fair and lovely. Winsome as a child, and yet with the heart of a woman all the time.'

'And she is beautiful?' questioned Mary.

'So beautiful that one would dread to think of her ever leaving that quiet country home, where she lives so sheltered a life. And she is as good as she is beautiful, yet there is about her nothing stiff, or narrow, or puritanic, except it be the purity of her heart and life, which might be deemed puritanic at court.'

'You would be the last to wish to bring her there,' said Mary. 'But, Hugo, I see no cause for dread in all this. Just for the present you may not be able to see her again, but what then? You are both young—all life is before you. And Love can surely overcome a few obstacles, else it were not worthy the name.'

'That is not the dread which haunts me, that is something widely different. Mary, promise not to question me, promise to reveal to no living soul any thoughts which may connect themselves with what I shall say. Of this dread I am not at liberty to speak in plain words. But thus far help me. Suppose to yourself such a case as the following. A father becomes acquainted with certain facts which may be of great use to the Government; he makes his son observe the said facts, that he may be able to bring him forward as a second witness. The son, owing obedience to the Government, and having sworn in all things to obey his father, has grave doubts as to the way in which the information has been obtained—thinks it was treacherously obtained. Moreover, he, beginning to think for himself, sees that "oppression" is the watchword of his father's party, and "liberty" the watchword of the oppressed. This, at any rate, he thinks he sees; but being as yet young, ignorant, lacking experience, he is scarce fit for any sort of action. When the time comes, and he is called upon to bear witness to what he has seen, what course is he to pursue?'

Mary was silent. She was too wise a counsellor ever to be in a hurry, and this was a curious and complicated case which Hugo had put before her.

'Tis very hard to see what would be right,' she said at length. 'I cannot yet feel sure, but in such extremity it

would doubtless be borne in upon a man what he ought to do. His conscience would show him what was right.'

'Conscience!' he exclaimed, impatiently, longing for some infallible authority outside himself. 'Conscience! I want something more definite, more unmistakable than that.'

'Surely,' she said, 'that is definite, if we train ourselves to listen to it, and ever in all things obey it.'

'But conscience is the plea of the conventiclers; they profess to suffer for conscience' sake.'

'And doubtless do,' said Mary. 'Do you not think that they may truly and honestly be following their conscience, and playing that part in the world's history which God saw to be right and necessary? And in truth, Hugo, I thought not to hear you of all people speak against this. Unless I am much mistaken, unless Rupert has misled me, there was once a time when you braved the sneers of the on-lookers and took your stand on this same conscience-hearkening.'

Hugo could once more see in imagination that Suffolk roadside, could once more feel that terrible struggle which, though he did not know it, had rendered it for ever impossible for him to return to his old peaceful submission and self-effacement.

'But then I saw clearly what was right. That was a very simple case. Now, in the case of that son whom I mentioned to you, matters are different, there is no plain right and plain wrong.'

'But there will be when the time comes,' said Mary, quietly.

'But how to see it—to be sure of it?' he faltered. 'Worst of all, how to do it?'

'Yes, there will be the hard part,' said Mary, thoughtfully. 'The seeing will surely be clear enough, but the doing?' She was silent for a minute. When she spoke again her face had changed, and there was something of diffidence in her voice.

'It has made me think of one day long ago when you and Rupert had both got into trouble at school, the time when Dr. Busby set you to learn all the collects and all the articles.'

'And flogged us till we said them without a fault,' said Hugo, laughing. 'I remember that part well enough, but the collects and the articles I have clean forgotten.'

'And I too, the greater number, though I learnt them with you,' said Mary. 'But there is one that always seemed to me so precisely what one wanted that I never could forget it, and from that day forth ever used it. It is the one about "the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful."'

'I too will use it,' he said, quickly. 'Ah! how long ago those days seem, Mary! Can you not remember how we all three sat up in the attic with Sir William's big Prayer-book? I can see the room now and the window that looked out on the river. The only article I have the ghost of a recollection of is "Original sin," "As the Pelagians do vainly talk,"—I can say that one sentence; and, as we learnt it, I remember the king's barge went past, and there came sounds of music and distant babel of voices. I ever think of the "Pelagians" when in a great assembly one hears the buzz of voices and can distinguish no words.'

Mary smiled, and in another minute their *tête-à-tête* was ended, for Colonel Sydney was announced, and Hugo, in the happiness of meeting his hero, had no more thought for the skeleton in his cupboard.

'I have had tickets presented to me for Dryden's new play,' said Sydney. 'I came to know whether I might have the pleasure of escorting you and your aunt, Mistress Mary.'

'We should greatly enjoy it,' said Mary. 'My aunt was talking of it but now at dinner.'

'They would both fain see the new play,' said Sir William, who had been roused by Sydney's entrance. 'As for me I have no time to spare for the theatre, and they are ever glad of an escort.'

'I seldom affect it myself,' said Sydney, 'but they tell me that this play is so fraught with political design that one ought to see it. Mr. Dryden has become the mere tool of the court of late. 'Tis pity that a man of such parts should so demean himself.'

'And he gains but little by it,' said Hugo. 'I heard him say but yesternight at Will's, that his salary as laureate had not been paid for years.'

'Poor devil!' said Sydney. 'And in the meantime the Duchess of Portsmouth enjoys 12,000*l.* a year of the nation's money! Well, you will allow me to escort you then? I will be with you presently. And you,' turning to Hugo, 'you will accompany us, will you not?'

After such an invitation from his hero, it was not to be imagined for a moment that thoughts of perplexing cases of conscience, of plots and revelations should trouble Hugo. When that evening he entered Drury Lane with Sydney, Lady Denham, and Mary, he was probably the happiest person in the theatre. Life, with that one exception of the skeleton now securely locked away, seemed to him particularly bright

and hopeful. Mary had spoken cheering words to him about Joyce, and had proved herself a delightfully sympathetic listener. Randolph had treated him as an equal and a friend. Sydney had not only asked him to the play, but had insisted that he should go back afterwards and sup with him.

This evening of the 4th December, 1682, was a memorable evening in the theatrical world. London had at that time two theatres, Drury Lane, known as the King's House, and the Duke's House in Dorset Gardens. This latter house was rich in the possession of Betterton, the greatest actor of the day, and they mounted their plays far better than was done at Drury Lane.

London was not large enough, however, to support two theatres comfortably, and for the last few years the management of the Duke's had done all in their power to cripple Killigrew, the manager of the King's House, so that he might be forced to consent to a union. This had just been effected, and this evening was to witness the first new play brought out by the united companies. The choice was doubtless a wise one, for not only was Dryden extremely popular, but this particular play of the 'Duke of Guise' had already been much talked of. It had been in the hands of the Lord Chamberlain for some months, he had hesitated whether to license it or not, for the parallel between the Duke of Guise and the Duke of Monmouth, and their respective plots against their kings, was dangerously close. At length, however, he had yielded, and on the first night every one rushed to see the long-talked-of piece. The house was crowded in every part, and in the pit was a turbulent assembly who, if not pleased, would assuredly express their feelings loudly. Sydney studied the audience with his keen, thoughtful eyes; even now Hugo felt sure he was musing as ever on the state of the country, closely watching the people that he might as far as possible know the state of their feelings, and rightly estimate their worth. At length the buzz of conversation was hushed, the roar of the 'Pelagians,' as Hugo would have put it, was suddenly stilled, for Smith, one of the best actors, appeared before the curtain to speak the prologue.

He spoke it well, and it was undoubtedly clever, but from the bold beginning, 'Our play's a parallel,' the whole thing bristled with bitter allusions to the events of the day, ending with a piece of satire which could not fail to enrage the Whigs.

'Make London independent of the crown :
A realm apart : the kingdom of the town,

Let ignoramus juries find no traitors,
And ignoramus poets scribble satires.
And, that your meaning none may fail to scan,
Do what in coffee-houses you began,—
Pull down the master, and set up the man.'

The play opened with a scene representing a meeting of the Council of Sixteen, who were the leaders of the conspiracy. A reference to sheriffs and charters made the Whig portion of the audience angry, but they restrained themselves until Bussy, one of the conspirators, uttered the words—

'Our city bands are twenty thousand strong.'

Now Shaftesbury had been wont to boast of his 'twenty thousand brisk boys in the city,' whom he could summon at a moment's notice, and a storm of hisses greeted this allusion.

The following scene between a magician who had espoused the cause of Guise, and the Devil, rather amused the audience, but signs were not wanting before long that the play would stir up yet greater enmity between the two parties.

As for Sydney, he sat in his place gravely watching the development of the story, making no sign whatever, till in the third act the scene between Grillon and the sheriffs produced a riotous expression of disapproval from a great part of the audience, and a frown upon his calm brow.

With the fourth act, matters only grew worse. The scene in the Louvre, in which the king has an interview with the Duke of Guise, could not fail to offend all who had the slightest regard for Monmouth. The appearance of an evil spirit in the garb of a preacher of the Gospel, and his assurance that 'ten thousand devils more are in this habit,' also gave great offence; while the touching scenes between Marmoutiere and Guise were so evidently intended to refer to the Duchess of Monmouth, and her endeavours to restrain her husband, that the audience hissed angrily. At length, Guise having been murdered in the palace, the king pronounced his coldly prudent wish that Fate might bring every traitor to ruin who dared the 'vengeance of indulgent kings,' and the play closed.

Then Mrs. Cook, a favourite actress, stepped before the curtain, and spoke the epilogue, which, by its coarse brutality, could not but disgust every unprejudiced person.

'Good Lord!' exclaimed Sydney, 'what will women come to? Methinks jesting about hangmen ill becomes them.'

His words were half lost in the deafening tumult which

ensued. Applause from one half the house, and indignant expressions of disgust from the other. A desperate endeavour on the part of the court party to prevent the play being damned on its first night, and a storm of groans and hisses from the Whigs.

The house was still all in an uproar when Sydney suggested to the ladies that they should leave, and having escorted them to their coach, he put his arm within Hugo's, and with a man bearing a link in front of them, they walked to his house, never once speaking.

Hugo had hitherto met Sydney either at the Denhams' or at one of the coffee-houses; he had never before been to his house, and coming that evening from the Egyptian darkness of the streets, which were lighted only by the links which foot-passengers were fain to carry, he was almost too much dazzled by the sudden return to the bright lights to see. Sydney took him into a room where preparations for supper were being made by a French man-servant.

'Mr. Wharncliffe will sup with me, Ducasse. Lay covers for two,' he said; then, as the man left the room, 'That is my faithful servant, and at the same time my friend, Joseph Ducasse. I should have fared ill without him.'

'We too know what a faithful serving-man can prove,' said Hugo. 'We have one of Cromwell's Ironsides, as staunch and trusty an old fellow as any in England. 'Twas he that taught me your name as a boy.'

'What! Was he in my troop?' questioned Sydney, his face lighting up with keen interest.

'I think not,' said Hugo. 'He was ever in Cromwell's regiment. But he mentioned seeing you at Marston Moor.'

'Perchance he is my brave rescuer!' exclaimed Sydney. 'Did he ever tell you of the deed of gallantry to which I owe my life?'

'Nay, I have heard naught of any rescue,' said Hugo; 'but he used to tell of the battle, and of how gallantly you charged that evening at the head of my Lord Manchester's regiment of horse, and how when men were being mowed down beside you like grain, you ever kept a good courage, and persevered long after you were sore wounded.'

'Methinks, then, I may at last have found my gallant rescuer,' said Sydney. 'Draw your chair to the hearth; I will tell you a story. That same evening, on Marston Moor, we had had the sharpest work I had ever seen. I was then but a little older than you are now, and had not had over-much

experience ; but there are many who maintain still that the fighting there was more severe than at any other battle during the whole war. It was evening when it began—seven o'clock. Well, we had been fighting for what seemed an eternity, and, but for Cromwell's timely aid, should have been routed. I was in command of a troop of horse in my Lord of Manchester's regiment, and Goring was giving us an ill time of it, when Cromwell, having utterly routed Prince Rupert's troopers, came to our help. By that time I had fallen, desperately wounded. I can well remember coming to after an interval of unconsciousness. The sunset light had faded out of the sky ; but the moon had risen, and there was light enough to show me that I was within the enemy's power. At that minute, however, there stepped forward from the ranks one of Cromwell's Ironsides, rushed onward to where I lay, seized me in his arms, and bore me off into safety. Seeing his great love and courage, I naturally desired to know his name, that I might in some way reward him. What do you think the noble fellow replied ? "Sir," he said, "I did it not for that, but merely for the love of you. And, therefore, as to my name, I desire to be excused."

'And you never learnt who he was?'

'Never. To this day I have not the faintest idea. No one noticed him ; how could they, in the midst of such a fight ? Among five thousand slain, the rescue of one insignificant unit is little likely to draw notice. It will remain for ever unknown save to him that did it.'

'It would have been just like Jeremiah,' said Hugo, musing. 'But, of course, I could never ask him.'

'No, no,' said Sydney ; 'let it remain as the brave fellow would have it. He shall be for ever unknown, yet never forgotten. Come, let us sup ; if that accursed play has not spoilt your appetite.'

'I fear I am too much of a "damned neuter" for that,' said Hugo, smiling and quoting the words of the epilogue—

' "Neither fish, nor flesh, nor good red-herring,"

as Mrs. Cook would say.'

Sydney made no reply for a minute. The speech was one which he could little understand, and he was not as a rule patient with aught that did not coincide with his own views, while opposition of any sort invariably called forth that overbearing temper which was well known to all his acquaintances. But there was something about Hugo which made it impossible

to take exception to his words, however little in accord with the hearer's opinions. He was so frank, so outspoken, and yet so humble that it was impossible to treat him like the rest of the world. Moreover, although people in general were quite ready to credit Sydney with resolute courage, and the 'huge deal of wit' which his mother had discovered in him while but a lad of fourteen, they had not the insight to perceive the 'sweetness of nature' which Lady Leicester had chronicled as perceived by all his early French acquaintances.

Perhaps he had now to a certain extent been soured by the difficulties and disappointments of a singularly wearing life. But there were some few who were able to perceive and to touch into life that tenderness, that lovingness, which was hidden under the stern exterior; and of these was Hugo. Therefore the two were always happy in each other's society. Each awakened in his companion that quality which was more apt to lie dormant—in Sydney tenderness—in Hugo strength.

'You will not ever be a "damned neuter,"' said Sydney, after the silence, in which he had been thoughtfully watching Hugo's face. 'The world cannot spare you, Hugo; some day you will prove worker as well as watcher.'

'And yet, though I know you abhor them, I cannot but see some merit in these much-abused Trimmers,' said Hugo. 'Surely the truth doth oftentimes lie betwixt extremes? Surely there is much to be said on either side? And then definitely committing yourself to a party, you commit yourself, maybe, to much that you do not altogether approve.'

'Life is a long series of minor disappointments,' said Sydney. 'Every failure to meet with your own ideal, both in private affairs and in the affairs of the nation, is a disappointment. But what then? such things are inevitable, you must make up your mind to them. You have thought, have studied the case, have arrived at your ideal of government; we will say that it is a Republic. Good; then unite yourself with that party which works hard to secure the rights of the people from wrongful invasion. What though perchance they go not so far as you would have them in some matters and further in others? You have to look at the matter in gross, not in detail; you must weigh the advantages with the disadvantages. Otherwise there could be no national progress; the spirits that can see a little further than their fellows would all stand aloof, so many helpless units of no service to their country. Union is strength, and to obtain union those who

love the people and would fain serve their country must be willing, as far as may honourably be, to sink their differences. Should your party be faithless to the cause of freedom, then leave it and go back to your plough like Cincinnatus. That is what I myself was forced to do.'

'I want to ask you one question, sir,' said Hugo, looking up quickly. 'There is ever much talk of the Duke of Monmouth's intentions; what think you, would that be for the good of the country?'

'If you mean would I advise any man to volunteer to-day for Monmouth's cause, I would reply no, without hesitation; the people love him, but the times are not yet ripe. It behoves all men, however, to watch the signs of the times, and to be ready for instant action when the tyranny hath grown insupportable. As for me, it is all one to me whether James, Duke of York, or James, Duke of Monmouth, be king, so long as the people regain their rights. Monmouth's chiefest recommendation to me is this: his title will not be altogether good, therefore he will be sure to rule well and for the benefit of his people; 'twill be to his own interest.'

'Are you acquainted with him?'

'I have but met him twice,' said Sydney. 'The first time my Lord Howard cozened us both, told me the duke would fain be introduced to me, and told the duke that I had begged him to make us acquainted.'

'Not over-scrupulous,' said Hugo, smiling.

'No; yet he did it doubtless with a good intent. I believe Howard to be a true patriot, and this he thought was doubtless warrantable for the good of the country.'

'And think you the duke's cause is indeed strong?'

'Strong, yet not strong enough,' said Sydney. 'All that wise men can do is to watch and be ready, to know each other, and to know who may be trusted. I am trusting you not a little by speaking thus boldly, for in these days I might be sent to the Tower for using such freedom of speech. Yet methinks I would right willingly trust you with my life.'

The blood rushed to Hugo's cheeks, his quiet, grey eyes shone with a strange light.

'I faith, sir, I would gladly die for you,' he said, in a low voice, 'could that prove my love.'

There was such perfect sincerity in his manner that even a very hard-hearted person could not fail to have been touched. As for Sydney, his eyes grew soft and humid, and his stern

face relaxed into a smile which Hugo remembered to his dying day.

‘I believe you, my son,’ he said, grasping his hand. ‘And I trust you with all my heart.’

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASQUE AT GRAY'S INN.

Thus fortune's pleasant fruits by friends increased be ;
The bitter, sharp, and sour by friends allay'd to thee ;
That when thou dost rejoice, then doubled is thy joy ;
And eke in cause of care the less is thy annoy.—ANON. 1557.

RANDOLPH watched with some curiosity the progress of Hugo's development. That winter he left him very much to himself, exacting implicit obedience, as ever, but taking good care to issue but few commands. He also increased his influence over him by showing much more interest in his concerns, and even at times treating him with an affection which bound his brother to him as nothing else could have done.

Hugo had never in his life been so happy, and insensibly he began to rely less on his books for interest and for companionship. The world of realities, the world political, the world of living men and women, began to interest him as it had never done before, and, under Sydney's guidance, his character rapidly strengthened and matured—rapidly, yet to himself, of course, insensibly.

He found the days of that winter almost too short for all the interests that had to be crowded into them. He was introduced to the Green Ribbon Club, at Chancery Lane end, where the ‘advanced’ men of the time used to meet, much scoffed at by the Tories. He was constantly with Sydney, who, now that his friend Penn had gone to America to carry out the system of government which he and Sydney had devised between them, was glad enough of some fresh interest. He was still as faithful as ever to the Denhams. His spare time would often be spent in Sir William's private laboratory, or in long excursions into the surrounding country in search of spoils, animal or vegetable, for the use of one or another of his scientific friends. He was asked more than once by the

little Duchess of Grafton to meet interesting celebrities at her father's house, and Randolph insisted upon a certain amount of attendance at the court. Thus, with his necessary routine of study, his time was fully occupied, and contact with the world and the necessity of managing for himself began to turn him into something more like the man of action after Jeremiah's own heart. Apparently he was going to surprise the old soldier after all, and prove himself to be better than a mere visionary. So far all was well. He had never been a great talker, and he had revealed to his brother nothing whatever of the conversation which passed between him and Sydney. Randolph knew better than to ask him, and was quite capable of playing a waiting game. So all went happily, and had any one told Hugo that a snare was laid for him, and that underneath all this fair semblance was a hideous reality, he would not have believed him. The sincere are always slow to suspect insincerity in others. Almost invariably they have to buy their experience, and to pay a high price for it.

For Mary Denham the time went but heavily ; being proud with that sort of maidenly pride which was perhaps more often to be found in past times, she barely confessed her trouble to her own heart even. That it was there she knew full well, but she rarely, if ever, formed it into words in her own mind. Instead, she devised a new set of embroidered covers for the chairs in the withdrawing-room, and, finding that insufficient, she took Sydney's advice, and threw herself into her uncle's pursuits with an ardour which gained for her the nick-name of the 'Blue-stockings' from Rupert. Perhaps inevitably her manner towards Hugo changed a little. The change was extremely slight, and yet to one of his acute perceptions it could not remain unnoticed. It troubled him a little even in the midst of his happiness, and in all the excitement of his first entrance into London life, but, man-like, it never occurred to him to connect the change with that talk they had had about Joyce Wharnccliffe.

It was not until Christmas Day that he had any opportunity of seeing her alone. Christmas was not an altogether enjoyable time to him, but he had a certain affection for the day, and this year was his first opportunity of sharing it all through with Randolph, for on the previous Christmas he had not been admitted as a student at the Temple, and could not share all the festivities in Hall.

Service in the Temple church over, the gentlemen and

students repaired to the Inner Temple Hall, where breakfast was prepared—a breakfast which from time immemorial had consisted of brawn, mustard, and malnsey. But the event of the day was the dinner, to which, as usual, they went in their cloaks and hats, but carefully laying aside their swords, which had never been allowed in Hall since a day long ago when a certain Sir John Davis, afterwards Lord Chief Justice of King's Bench, had once bastinadoed a man at dinner. From that time forward no weapon had been allowed to put in an appearance, save a knife or dagger, which was at times indispensable in cutting up the meat. Hugo had never before dined at the Christmas dinner, and with Randolph at a little distance among the gentlemen of his standing, and Denham beside him, ever ready with jests and laughter, the time passed merrily enough. The whole assembly uncovered while grace was sung, and had barely resumed their hats and places when the doors were thrown wide, and there entered a procession of serving-men and singers with the boar's head. Then the vaulted roof rang with the strains of the merry old carol, every one joining lustily in the chorus. The words had been sung for many generations, and ran as follows—

'The bore's heade in hande bring I,
With garlandes gay and rosemary :
I pray you all synge merely,
Qui estis in convivio.

CHORUS :—Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.

'The bore's heade, I understande,
Is the chief servyce in this land :
Loke whereever it be fande ;
Servite cum cantico.

CHORUS :—Caput, &c.

'Be gladde, Lordes, both more and lasse,
For this hath ordayned our stewarde,
To chere you all this Christmasse,
The bore's heade with mustarde.

CHORUS :—Caput, &c.'

The quaint old customs, the great bunches of evergreens with which the hall was decorated, the genial good-fellowship, all were enjoyable to Hugo ; but by and by, when he had been asked again and again to sing, and had done his duty by the assembly ; when many had sung themselves hoarse, and many more had made themselves drunk, and those who were still sober enough had betaken themselves to dicing, to the satis-

faction of the butler, whose box received a certain percentage of the winnings, and who often made in a single night as much as fifty pounds—then he began to weary of his noisy surroundings. Never till now had he passed a Christmas without going to the house in Norfolk Street. He would leave these revellers, and see how matters fared with his friends; he would try to discover the reason of that strange and unaccountable change in Mary.

All seemed as usual at the Denhams'. Mary wore a festival dress of amber satin, and she talked gaily enough to the aunts and cousins who always spent Christmas Day with them. Yet, whenever she turned to him, he was quite conscious that she was making an effort to talk; the ease, the perfect certainty of friendship was gone. It saddened him. What had he said? What had he done to bring about this change? Was the alteration in him or in Mary? Was the fault his or hers? He would fain have persuaded himself that the change existed only in his fancy; but his keen perceptions were not to be thus hoodwinked. An indefinable 'something' had arisen between them; and in friendship the 'indefinable' is far more dangerous than the actual and palpable barriers. Barriers may be surmounted; but who is to surmount that which, though real and unmistakable, is yet incomprehensible? His friend was slipping away from him, and he knew it.

Christmas evening was not a favourable opportunity for any sort of explanation. He watched in vain for a chance of even a few minutes' talk with Mary. There was snapdragon for the benefit of the little cousins, and then Sir William said they could not spend the Christmas without one game of Hoodman Blind; and thus, amid much laughter and mirth, the hours slipped by, and, save Hugo and Mary, every one enjoyed the merry-making.

Matters went on in this way for some weeks. Never could Hugo find Mary alone, and never could he get over that curious feeling of division between them, which made meeting far more of a pain than a pleasure.

At length came an opportunity, which in a sort of despair he determined to seize. It was the 2nd February, and there was to be a masque ball at Gray's Inn. The Denhams were personal friends of Sir Richard Gips, the Master of the Revels, and Hugo knew that Mary was sure to be there; he also had received an invitation, and surely the 'vain talk of the Pelagians' would afford him shelter sufficient for a private conversation.

The hall at Gray's Inn, though not so large as the Middle Temple Hall, was, nevertheless, a capital ball-room, and its carved oak roof showed to advantage in the soft light of the myriad candles ranged in sconces round the walls. Hugo arrived rather late, only just before the royal party, indeed, and the scene was picturesque enough to divert him from his anxiety for the time. The blaze of lights, the flashing of the ladies' diamonds, the wonderful richness and variety of colour, and the curious effect of the masks worn by every one present pleased him greatly. Almost before he had taken in the scene, the people rose at the announcement that the king was approaching, and immediately afterwards Charles entered with the queen, who was passionately fond of dancing though she danced but ill, the Duke and Duchess of York, and the rest of the court. All wore masks, but many of them were easily recognisable to Hugo.

It was not until the dancing was about to begin that he remembered Mary. His friend was here somewhere in this gay crowd, and he must find her, spite of her disguise. Perhaps explanations might be easier when the face of each would be protected, and no expression visible save in the eyes.

But how to find her? The king had already led out a lady for a single *coranto*, and by rights Hugo should have been respectfully watching his sovereign. He cast no single glance, however, at the dancers, but sought everywhere with eager restless eyes for the dark-brown curls and the slim figure, a little below the medium height, for which alone in all this multitude he cared.

'You are searching for some one?' said a voice at his elbow, a sweet voice, in which there lurked innocent, girlish laughter. Two bright eyes looked out from behind the mask, smiling at him, and he instantly recognised the little Duchess of Grafton.

He had not expected to meet her, and was pleased, for she was one of the few pure-minded women whom he knew, and her youth and her romantic story, together with a certain sweet discretion very rare in one of her age, made her strangely fascinating.

'May I have the pleasure of dancing with your grace?' he said.

'You have recognised me!' she said, laughing. 'And yet methinks I was right well disguised. Ay, I will dance with you, and you can pursue your search in the meanwhile.'

'I was looking for Mistress Mary Denham,' said Hugo.

‘But it is not easy amid a host of maskers to discover even a friend of long standing.’

‘Yet ’tis not long since I heard you sing a ditty in which over far greater difficulties you maintained “Love would find out a way,”’ said the little duchess.

She had already built up a romance for these two friends of hers, and, seeing that her own romance had been all acted out in the days of her childhood, and her fate fixed before she had reached her teens, her innocent match-making was excusable enough. Hugo thought of Joyce—he always thought of her when singing that song—then, recollecting the connection of the duchess’s words, he coloured crimson, and was thankful that he wore a mask.

‘Mistress Denham has been my friend ever since our childhood,’ he said, quickly. ‘But friendship, however keen, however true, gives not that power of which the song speaks.’

The little duchess was disappointed; she perceived from his manner that he was assuredly in love,—but not with Mary.

‘You men have not so nice an observation as we of the weaker sex,’ she said. ‘Now I perceived Mistress Mary at once.’

‘Tell me,’ said Hugo quickly; ‘is she near?’

‘You are wanting, as I said, in nice observation,’ said the little duchess, who could tease upon occasion. ‘I recognised her at once by her little feet; she hath the smallest and loveliest in the room. Now, if you were to watch, to exercise your powers of observation——’

She looked at him laughingly, as he rapidly scanned the feet of the dancers.

‘She wears a dress of white satin, and pearls round her neck,’ continued the little duchess, ‘and her cavalier is——’

She broke off, for Hugo, with a start of surprise, at length recognised Mary Denham in the lady who was at that moment dancing the *coranto* with a gentleman magnificently arrayed in blue satin slashed with yellow, whom he had discovered to be his old school-fellow Matthew Prior, now an undergraduate at St. John’s College, Cambridge.

His mind was somewhat preoccupied when his turn came and he had to lead out the Duchess of Grafton, but as usual he danced extremely well, better—at least one person thought so—than any one else in the hall. Mary was sitting now beside her aunt; she watched every part of the complicated dance with an absorbed interest, ever following with her eye the slight, graceful figure in crimson velvet laced with silver,

white silk hose gathered below the knee with silver braid, and shoes in which there glittered the newly-introduced silver shoe-buckles.

And yet, when Hugo drew near, that curious barrier made itself more than ever felt, they were no longer the familiar friends they had once been. She was nevertheless glad to dance with him, and when, by and by, he had found at length that opportunity for uninterrupted talk for which he had waited so long, perhaps, even though her heart beat painfully, she was yet glad that the present state of things had been to him unbearable. She knew quite well what he was going to say: how she was to answer him she could not plainly tell.

‘Mary,’ he said, his voice falling very sweetly upon her ear, amid all the uproar of general conversation, and the twanging and scraping of lutes and fiddles. ‘Mary, what has come betwixt us of late? I ever deemed our friendship of too long standing to admit of any change save that of growth.’

‘Surely it must change as we grow older,’ she replied, in as matter-of-fact a voice as she could command. ‘Not of course in degree, but in manner. We cannot ever be children.’

‘Must age stiffen us—freeze us into formality?’ questioned Hugo.

‘Nay, I said not so,’ replied Mary, smiling. ‘When was I ever stiff or formal in your company?’

‘Those perchance were cold words to describe what I mean. And yet of late I have ever been aware of some change in you, in your manner.’

‘You are no longer the Westminster boy with whom I used to play; you are a man of the world, you begin to mix much in society—how then should you find all as it used to be in the old times? We have both of us left childhood behind us.’

‘And must friendship be left behind too?’ he questioned.

‘You mistake my meaning,’ said Mary; ‘I mean only that your changed life, your fresh interests, make you fancy a change in me.’

‘Nay,’ he said, ‘the change is not in my fancy, never will you persuade me of that. The change is there, and it has come to this, that, whereas in old times I came to Norfolk Street, knowing I should find there all I had learnt to look for, now I come there in dread, or in an expectation which is ever frustrated.’

‘How mean you?’ said Mary, falteringly. Her mask veiled her face effectually, but something of agitation betrayed itself in her voice.

'There! I have vexed you!' exclaimed Hugo, full of self-reproach. 'Do not for one moment dream that the house will not ever be a home to me, the one home for me in all London; but yet of late it has come to pass that I no longer can go there feeling sure of you as I once did. There has been some change in you, though you deny it never so much.'

'Hugo!' she exclaimed, impetuously, 'I have treated you ill. And you are quite right, there has been some slight change in my manner. I tried to help it, but failed.'

'What have I done?' said Hugo, bewildered. 'Has any slanderer come betwixt us with some idle tale?'

'Nay, there has been no slanderer,' said Mary, smiling. 'Think you that I would credit what the idle gossips have to charge you with? Come, Hugo, you have in good truth lost all trust in me if you can think that.'

'But why, then, this change?' said Hugo, anxiously.

'It was my own foolish fault,' said Mary, speaking quickly, forcibly, and with the manner of one who desires above all things to make matters clear. 'I thought you would no longer have need of me; I thought, after that last talk we had on the night of the play, that sisters—I had been a sort of sister to you—were no longer needed when brides are found. What should you want with friends when you are in love, you foolish boy?'

In truth, had Hugo not been in love, he might have noticed that the little laugh which ended this confession was not altogether a natural one. But he was desperately in love, and he was but nineteen; moreover, the Duchess of Grafton's accusation had been one of the true words spoken in jest—he was not by nature observant.

'How could you think that!' he exclaimed. 'It is the very reason that makes me need you more than ever. That day you cheered me and comforted me—made it seem possible that I might at least see Mistress Wharncliffe once again. But how can even that hope satisfy me, if you turn from me? Do without you, forsooth!'

Mary's fingers tightened upon the handle of her fan; for a minute she was quite silent, and very still.

'You will not condemn me to aught so miserable,' continued Hugo, pleadingly. 'You will no longer dream that I can spare my best friend. What do you imagine my life would have been had it not been for you?'

'By your own confession I have rendered you miserable these two months!' said Mary, with a very tremulous smile.

‘But, Hugo, you shall never again feel that aught has come betwixt us. I will ever believe that you still have need of a sister, and you shall come to our house when you will, and shall learn once more to feel sure of me. Are you satisfied?’

Of course he was satisfied. What more could he have desired? And she herself? Well, with her, matters must of course be very different. His perfect happiness involved, though he little thought it, her loss. But, fervently wishing his happiness, she accepted patiently and contentedly the part assigned her.

Even at that very time, when Hugo led her down the hall to take her place in the country-dance which was just beginning, she was not exactly unhappy. He needed her still, and, moreover, she knew now, what she had never before even guessed, that she had been a power and an influence in his life. That night, in the gay throng gathered in Gray’s Inn Hall, there were many who bore a heavier heart and a less innocent conscience than Mistress Mary Denham.

CHAPTER X.

PENSHURST.

Detestable bribes! worse than the oaths now in fashion in this mercenary court. I mean to owe neither my life nor my liberty to such means. When the innocence of my actions will not protect me, I will stay away till the storm be overpast. . . . I must live by just means, or serve to just ends, or not at all.—ALGERNON SYDNEY.

ONE day, towards the end of April, Hugo happened to meet Colonel Sydney in the Park.

‘You are the very man I wanted!’ exclaimed the Republican. ‘Look you, on the morrow I go down to Penshurst for a fortnight’s rest and change. Come with me; it would do you good.’

‘There is nothing I should so much like!’ said Hugo, his heart beating high with happiness at the prospect. ‘An my brother will consent to it, I will assuredly come, sir.’

‘I had forgot your guardian,’ said Sydney. ‘But get his leave if you can, for I would fain have you with me; and truly he cannot care so much as you think for your making your

way at court, else he would not have permitted you to make my acquaintance.'

As he spoke, he glanced rather scornfully in the direction of the water, where the king was feeding his favourite ducks; then, his face softening again, he nodded kindly to his young follower, and passed on.

Much to Hugo's surprise, Randolph gave a ready consent to his request, and the next morning found him riding into Kent by Sydney's side, in the seventh heaven of happiness.

How often in after days he lived over again that memorable visit—and how little he thought at the time that the calm enjoyment of those country days, the rare delight of close intercourse with that great mind, were to fit and prepare him for meeting a sea of troubles.

It was a beautiful spring afternoon when they dismounted at the great doorway of Penshurst Place. Lord Leicester was at his London house, and Hugo was by no means sorry to hear of his absence, for he knew well that the two brothers were not on good terms with each other, and naturally he was glad to have his friend and master to himself.

They had dined on the road, but Sydney ordered supper to be served at an early hour in the picture-gallery; then, when they had changed their dusty travelling-dresses, he took Hugo round the beautiful old house.

'You must learn your way about,' he said, with a smile; 'tis not so hard as you might think to lose your way in this rambling old mansion.'

'I can well imagine missing the way,' said Hugo, delighting in the beautiful rooms as only a poet can. 'I suppose you, sir, know it all by heart.'

'Ay,' he said, with a sad smile, 'I could walk it blindfold—every inch of the house and grounds is graven on my heart,—and often in exile have I roamed in imagination through these rooms, and grown sick for another sight of the old home. What games of All hid we used to have! The place wants children now, it feels bare and cold. Why, this hall where we now stand—I can remember it decked out with greenery for the Christmas feast! We all feasted together that one day of the year, and after the good old custom, the retainers at yonder side tables, and my father and mother and the guests at the table on yonder dais, with such of us brats as could behave ourselves fitly. Ah, well! ah, well! 'tis like enough that fifty years should bring changes! My father and mother dead—Henry dead—Philip estranged from me—Robert a courtier

and a rake—pretty Dorothy the beauty of bygone days—Isabella ungrateful and cold, though I did my best for her.’

He seemed to have forgotten Hugo’s presence, and to be thinking aloud. Presently he recollected himself.

‘Tis a fine old hall, is it not?’ he said, looking lovingly round the white walls with their groups of armour. ‘Yonder, in that black gallery, the minstrels played on high days and holidays, and through those archways beneath I can well remember seeing the mummers file in on a winter’s night. ’Twas here too that in Commonwealth days we acted *Coriolanus*, which same acting made no little stir, and was even construed into a hit at the Protector.’

They left the hall, and Sydney led the way up a winding stone staircase and into a large wainscoted room, where he paused to show Hugo a picture of his ancestor, Sir Philip Sydney.

‘Oh, is that Sir Philip?’ said Hugo, eagerly. ‘I have often wondered what the face could have been on which Roydon bestowed such high praise;’ and he quoted the well-known lines beginning—

‘A sweet, attractive kind of grace.’

Sydney, watching him, thought the words would have been quite as appropriate to the speaker, but he only said—

‘Yes, that is Philip Sydney. He was always a great hero with me as a boy. I remember coveting my brother’s name, and vexing myself that they had dubbed me with so unwieldy a prefix as Algernon.’

Hugo turned from the young, sweet, intellectual face of the ancestor to another picture which hung near the hearth. He recognised it instantly—there was no mistaking the auburn colouring, the sad eyes, the grave, austere face of the patriot upon which, even then, though the picture had been taken many years ago, sorrow had set her seal.

‘This face for me!’ he exclaimed, involuntarily. ‘’Tis worth fifty Sir Philip’s!’

‘Shall I tell you why you think so?’ said Sydney, while for the moment something of the sweet attractive look of his ancestor dawned in his usually grave eyes. ‘It is because we naturally admire those who are our opposites. No, you must not depreciate my hero for the sake of crying up your very faulty teacher. Philip Sydney had a happy lot; he was universally beloved, he died a happy death, and his generous thought for another has set a high example to all succeeding

generations. What more could a man wish for? This room we are coming to was furnished for Queen Elizabeth; but we will not linger now, but come to the gallery, where I have ordered a fire—the evenings feel chilly to me after my long stay in Southern France.'

The gallery which they now entered was a noble room, and one which Sydney preferred to any other in the house. Like every student, he loved pacing to and fro, he loved air and light and space. Ducasse had arranged his books and papers for him on a table near the great window, while a second table near the hearth was prepared for supper. Mellow sunset light filled the whole place, gilding the polished floor and the wainscoted walls, lighting up the portraits and the somewhat stiff array of high-backed chairs and carved tables laden with great china vases. Hugo looked down the long vista, and thought he could be very happy here; but close to the door a picture of three children brought him to a pause.

Sydney smiled.

'You will not so easily recognise this, I think.'

But even here Hugo was not at fault. Two of the boys were just the conventional painted children of bygone times, but the one to the right had something vigorous and real about his whole attitude. He was a little red-haired fellow, holding a hound in a leash with one hand, and with the other grasping a staff. There was, even in his childish face, a trace of the strength, the determination, the dauntless spirit of the man.

Sydney passed on with a sigh. Perhaps he thought of the weary years of sorrow and disappointment which had been in store for the child; perhaps he remembered the unfulfilled hopes of his youth.

They sat down by the great window at the far end of the apartment, and looked out into the dewy garden, with its fair lawns and well-kept walks.

'You are satisfied with your life?' asked Sydney, after a long pause. 'You are happy?'

'Quite satisfied,' said Hugo, quickly. 'Quite happy. It has been a wonderful year for me.'

Sydney seemed about to put some other question, but he checked himself. Was it not natural that he should be satisfied—as yet? Life had brought him many fair things during the last few months, and he had not yet realised the hollowness of the world's friendship—he lived in a world of intrigue without being aware of it—he judged others by himself. The awaken-

ing must come ere long ; but Sydney would not hasten it, he would only prepare his young follower, as far as in him lay, to face the coming storm.

And so a peaceful week passed by. They read together, talked together, walked together. Sydney was busy correcting a manuscript, written some years previously. He discussed this with Hugo, let him read it through, and help in searching for various references.

One morning the weather was so mild that they took their books out into the park.

It was the first of May, and the golden sunshine made the grassy slopes of that lovely place look like a little paradise. The giant beech-trees were in all the glory of the early spring green, while the oaks gave a touch of sombre russet to the landscape, with here and there a rosy tinge where the buds were beginning to unfold themselves. All was very still ; nothing was to be heard, save the splashing of the water-fowl in the lake, the singing of the birds, the soft movements of the deer browsing among the brake-fern, and now and then faint strains of very distant music, just sufficient to remind the two who were revelling in that peaceful quiet that somewhere the country-folk were dancing round the village may-pole, and paying homage to some pretty May queen.

Hugo was stretched at full length on the velvety turf reading the last pages of the manuscript of those *Discourses on Government*, of which later on so much was to be heard.

Sydney was leaning back against the trunk of the tree known as Sir Philip Sydney's oak, which grew not far from the lake, and he had in his hand a small volume of Plato. He had read but little, however, being much more inclined to watch the face of the young man beside him and mark his progress through the manuscript. Hugo was fast approaching the end, and the writer wondered a little how the work on which he had spent so many years of thought, so much arduous labour would affect him. The thought came to him, as it must have come to many, that this work of his which had cost him much would, if read by the many at all, be read cursorily, would perchance be the interest of a day or the occupation of a few idle moments, and then would be tossed aside and forgotten. The writer stands in the same position to the creations of his brain as the parent to the child. He alone can quite understand them, because he alone has lived ever with them, and he alone knows all they have cost. He wondered how this work of his would strike Hugo Wharn-

cliffe, how far he would gather from his work what he had intended to be gathered. For, after all, words are but clumsy means of communicating thought, and, moreover, most readers read themselves and their prejudices into every book they handle.

This quiet week at Penshurst had done much—far more than Sydney knew—towards developing within his guest the love of country, the love of freedom, above all, the love of justice, which had hitherto lain somewhat dormant in his heart. The rigid discipline of Dr. Busby, the tyranny of Randolph, combined with the reverential devotion which was ingrained in his nature, had not been favourable to the growth of these virtues. Nor would they ever have sprung into life in Hugo's heart had he not seen them embodied in a man whom instinctively he worshipped. He was not as yet capable of perceiving the true and beautiful in abstract; he saw them only, as perhaps most of us see them, when embodied in human beings, either immortalised in history or actually living. But under Sydney's guidance he was growing rapidly, and to a keen observer nothing is more fascinating than to mark this sort of growth. In all the anxieties, in all the national griefs of that time, Sydney was able to interest himself keenly in the frequent contact with a young, fresh, vigorous mind feeling its way into greater things. Hugo's devotion was very sweet to him, moreover, for he was at that time strangely friendless, and everywhere regarded as one with whom it would be impolitic to cultivate a close acquaintance.

Perhaps he was thinking of this when he spoke next to Hugo. The young man had turned the last leaf of the manuscript, had read the last words of the notable *Discourses*, and was in truth almost burdened by the feeling that beside him stood the writer, this man who had studied the theory of government more deeply than any man of that age.

'So you have ended your task,' said Sydney, with a smile. 'How now, are you not somewhat taken aback to find yourself the guest of one who writes what some would account treason? Bethink yourself! Were it not better to withdraw from the acquaintance of such an one?'

'Nay, sir,' said Hugo, with a gesture of eager protest, 'say not such words even in jest.'

''Tis true,' said Sydney, 'that so coldly prudent a thought would be slow to rise in your generous heart. But in truth, Hugo, I must warn you that there is verily some risk to you in being accounted my friend.'

‘If so, then I gladly take the risk,’ said Hugo, quickly. ‘And, should it indeed ever be that the giving is not wholly on your side, then I shall be right happy.’

The elder man looked sadly, and yet with much tenderness, at the eager face of the youth, who spoke so warmly, so promptly, words which would involve so much.

‘I see no cause for immediate anxiety,’ he said. ‘But the Whig party is now in grave peril. Monmouth’s cause not yet ripe, and even the city won over by foul means to the interests of the court. For the time I see naught that can be done save to keep quiet, and to prepare the people for the next election, that they may perceive their rights and their duties. Yet even now, while the nation groans under the yoke of the Stuarts, there is much servile adulation of the king. Heard you the song which was sung not long since at the Lord Mayor’s banquet? A description of his Majesty, forsooth!

“In whom all the virtues are fitly combined,
Whom God as a pattern hath sent to mankind.”’

The words were such a grotesque mockery that Hugo could not restrain a laugh.

‘I bear no ill-will to his Majesty,’ he said, after a pause. ‘But yet this fawning servility doth disgust one.’

‘Ay,’ said Sydney. ‘And can you wonder, then, that before me is ever a vision of the time when the foul flattery, the arrogant pride of such courts shall be for ever done away? Not long since I had with me in this very place the laws which my friend Penn framed in concert with myself for his new province, his fair Utopia over the seas. But i’ faith it was oft-times sad work to copy fair those laws for a foreign land, while my own land was in slavery.’

‘Tell me, sir,’ said Hugo, ‘what were the chiefest improvements devised in those laws? How did they differ from our own?’

‘Briefly I will sketch them to you,’ said Sydney. ‘They are to have two legislative chambers, both of them elected by universal suffrage. They are to have annual parliaments, and no property qualification for members. They are to have vote by ballot, perfect freedom in all religious matters, universal education, abolition of the death penalty for all crimes save murder and treason. Idleness is to be punished as a vice, prisons are to be used as houses of education and industry in the hope of raising the inmates, instead of as now hopelessly

degrading them, and last, but not least, though your profession may not bless us, fees of law are to be fixed at a low rate, and to be hung up in all courts of justice.'

'Twill verily be a Utopia!' exclaimed Hugo, amazed at the novelty and the daring character of the reforms, as indeed he might well be, seeing that Penn and Sydney were two hundred years at least in advance of their time, and propounded schemes which were none of them adopted in England till the nineteenth century, and for want of some of which the nation yet suffers.

'That will be the basis of the constitution, and the people themselves will have the power of advancing upon that basis. The power is in their hands. Utopia, you think!' he smiled a little. 'Well, perhaps—or we will say a free land, which is the same thing in other words.'

Hugo was silent for some minutes; the loveliness of the surroundings, the glad spring-time, the sweet sights and sweet sounds filled his heart with a strange pain. Like the hectic beauty of one dying of consumption, fair Nature seemed but the outer veil of a hideous disease; for, alas! alas! in this land, this very land where the grass was so green, the landscape so fair, the people were daily falling more and more under the tyrannical power of a monarch who was great in nothing but double-dealing, and had not even the courage of his opinions, like the far less popular Duke of York. Faintly he began to perceive the evils of the present, and yet it was well-nigh impossible for one brought up as he had been altogether to agree with Sydney's views. He was not yet capable of grasping them in their entirety, while, as to entering into any sort of action which would be contrary to Randolph's liking, the thought was torture to him. Luckily there was as yet no question as to action; as yet it was possible to stand aloof and study each side.

Even as he mused, he was watching a figure which had just emerged from behind the clump of trees between the oak and Lancup Well. It proved to be Ducasse bearing a letter, and the letter was for Hugo. Somehow, as he opened it, a cloud seemed to fall upon the day, and a chill foreboding filled his heart.

It was from Randolph, and consisted of a peremptory command to return to London that very day. He had need of him.

He handed the square sheet to Sydney without a word, but it was not difficult to see that the summons was most un-

welcome. Moreover, he was now old enough to feel the injustice of sending him no word of explanation, of requiring him to forego what he so greatly prized, while giving no reason whatever.

‘You must in truth go?’ questioned Sydney.

‘Ay, sir, and without delay,’ he replied.

Sydney was silent for a minute. He in his young days had suffered much from the undue harshness of his father’s treatment, and he felt sorry for this youth, who was far less capable than he had been of endurance. Plucking a leaf from the oak-tree to mark his place in his book, he turned to Hugo.

‘My son, it has long been in my mind to say one thing to you. We have learnt to know each other, and I have not had you thus closely with me these days without noting that in you which assures me that you will in many matters have to go through life more or less as a solitary. I, too, had to learn that lesson early in life. The time will assuredly come when you will find yourself differing from your brother,—prepare yourself for that time, that when it comes you may be strong to meet it.’

Hugo winced. The mere mention of a difference with Randolph was keenly painful to him.

‘Yes,’ said Sydney, marking his expression, ‘’tis not always those who give their lives for their country who serve her at greatest cost; many things are more to be apprehended than a hatchet. I mind me long years ago using those very words to my father when the sense of his displeasure and continued neglect weighed far more with me than the risk of secret assassination. You are in some ways more fit to stand alone than I was.’

‘More fit, sir!’ echoed Hugo, amazed.

‘Ay, though you look surprised, ’tis nathless true,’ said Sydney, with a smile. ‘For the best part of your life has been lived with books rather than with men, like my friend Pallavicini, and therefore loneliness will press on you the less heavily. It was not till I was nigh upon forty that I learnt to have my conversation with birds, trees, and books, and to suffice unto myself.’

‘Was that during your stay in Italy, sir?’

‘Yes, during a summer I spent at Frascati. There I fell with some eagerness to reading, and found so much satisfaction in it that though I every morning saw the sun rise, yet I never went abroad till six or seven of the clock at night. Now this hermit life is by nature tasteful to you, and therefore you may

perchance mind solitude and enforced inaction less than I have done.'

They walked slowly towards the house while talking, for Hugo was too promptly obedient to neglect even for an instant Randolph's peremptory command. He would not consent to wait even for the one o'clock dinner, but begged that his horse might at once be saddled. Nevertheless, there was some little delay, for which in his heart he blessed the grooms, and in the meantime Sydney paced to and fro with him in the avenue, which was called Saccharissa's Walk, in memory of Sydney's beautiful sister Dorothy, immortalised by Waller under that name. But Hugo bestowed no thought upon the daily walks which the 'matchless dame' had been in the habit of taking in that stately aisle; he could think only of the grave, strong, thoughtful face beside him, grave even to sternness, and yet to him never lacking in tender kindness. Through the fresh green of the trees there flickered the golden May sunshine, and the birds sang with a joyous recklessness which was just now ill in accord with the heaviness of Hugo's heart. He could not have put his dread into words, but it was there, a deadly oppression, weighing down his heart like lead. He put into words the more definite fear which Sydney's speech by Lancup Well had suggested to him.

'Sir,' he said, 'I trust I am no coward, but yet I own that the thought of a difference with my brother doth trouble me. I fear that naught could make me insensible to it.'

'He that is not sensible of such things must be an angel or a beast,' said Sydney. 'And I can well deem that to you the prospect of any difference is a species of torture. For that very reason I spoke to you. What if it be torture? dread it not! what if it cripple your life, as mine has been crippled? still, dread it not! Believe me, lad, there is naught in this world to be dreaded save sin and shame.'

Into Hugo's mind there flashed the recollection of that stealthy visit to Mondisfield Hall. Never once during the peaceful visit to Penshurst had his skeleton stalked forth from its cupboard, but now it made itself hatefully apparent, walking with him through that beautiful avenue, choking him with its deadly power.

'What can one do when duties seem to clash?' he said. 'Ah, sir, they must oft have done so in your life, perchance even now they may do so. Tell me—in such a case, what do you do?'

In his tone was all the suppressed eagerness, the subdued

emotion of one who, in sore distress, turns to a stronger, older, wiser nature, with the instinct that in age and experience the true counsellors are to be found.

Sydney walked for a few paces in silence. When he replied, he looked not at Hugo, but far out beyond the trees, where shadows and flickering gleams of sunlight broadened into one wide expanse of uninterrupted brightness.

‘I walk in the light God hath given me,’ he said with a grave simplicity. ‘If it be dim or uncertain I must bear the penalty of my errors.’

Before anything more had passed, a servant approached to tell him that the horse was ready. Ducasse had collected Hugo’s possessions, and there was no excuse for further delay.

‘Take this little volume as a remembrance of your visit,’ said Sydney, placing in his hand the book he had been reading beneath the oak-tree; it was the *Republic* of Plato.

Feeling like one in a dream, Hugo uttered thanks and farewells, grasping Sydney’s hand, then mounted his chestnut, and gathering up the reins, started on his journey. What was this weight at his heart? Why did this awful foreboding overcome him? The oppression grew intolerable, and with a sudden impulse he turned back to the great doorway, where Sydney stood alone, the servant having returned to the house.

‘Has Ducasse forgotten aught?’ questioned Sydney, as the young man dismounted.

‘Naught, sir,’ said Hugo, once again grasping his hand. ‘Pardon me, and think me not in very truth a coward, but there is over me a sense of coming trouble, and I cannot shake it from me.’

‘You are over finely strung for this hard world,’ said Sydney. ‘Nathless all the more for that very reason it behoves you to dread nothing. “Sanctus amor patriæ dat animum.” Forget not our motto. We shall meet again in London. Farewell, my son.’

And therewith the strong hand rested on his shoulder for a minute, and in silence—a silence which he dared not trust himself to break—he bade a last farewell to Algernon Sydney.

In the dreary numbness of feeling which fell upon him as once more he resumed his way, he raised himself in his stirrups and turned for a last glance at the place. One more look at that noble front, at those battlemented towers; one more look at the great doorway still visible between the beech-trees; one more look at the figure in the plain brown doublet and broad-brimmed Spanish beaver. Why did those last words, ‘We

shall meet again in London,' return to him so persistently, and with such a melancholy cadence? If they met again, then all would be well, and this hateful foreboding which chilled him through and through would prove a device of the fiend's, designed to weaken and depress him. It should do nothing of the kind! And putting his horse into a hand-gallop, he rode rapidly through the fair Kentish woods, driving out fears for the future with the words of Sydney's motto, 'Holy love of country gives courage.'

CHAPTER XI.

WILL'S COFFEE-HOUSE.

To mery London, my most kyndly nurse.—SPENSER.

THE sun was getting low when Hugo, having ridden as hard as the state of the roads would permit, reached London. Even the sight of his beloved Abbey could not cheer him, there was no denying that this sudden return was highly distasteful to him, and weary with his long ride, and the heat of the May-day, he made his way on with graveness bordering on dejection. On past Charing-Cross, and along the Strand, with its continuous row of houses and shops on the northern side, and its noble mansions with gardens stretching to the river on the south; on through the busy throng of people, the clatter of tongues, the ceaseless noise of street traffickers who filled the air with their shrill cries, 'Buy a dish of flounders' mingling with the cry of 'Ballads, ballads, fyne new ballads'; and 'Fyne oate cakes' getting hopelessly mixed with 'Quick periwinkles'; while ever from the busy chapmen at the shop-doors there was a ceaseless refrain of 'What d'you lack? What d'you lack?'

Reaching at length the quiet of King's Bench Walk, he found no one in but old Jeremiah.

'Glad to see you, master, right glad,' said the old servant. 'And you look all the better for your stay in the country.'

'Ay, I am well enough,' said Hugo, somewhat wearily. 'What is the meaning of it all, Jerry? Why doth my brother send for me?'

'In truth, lad, I know not,' said Jerry, brushing the

traveller's dusty cloak while he spoke. 'He hath not been well the last two days, and maybe that is the reason he needs you.'

'Unwell! Randolph unwell,' exclaimed Hugo. 'Then I am right glad he sent for me. Did he leave no message for me where to find him?'

'Ay, lad, he said an you came before night you were to go to him at Will's, he would be there till eight of the clock.'

'Then I will go to him at once,' said Hugo, promptly. 'No,' as Jeremiah would fain have detained him, 'I can rest there as well as here. Lock up the place, Jerry, and take a turn yourself, these chambers feel stifling.'

He hurried away, and emerging from the quiet regions of the Temple, once more found himself in the realms of noise and confusion. Passing through Temple Bar, he made his way through the ranks of hackney coaches which stood for hire in the open space around the lofty may-pole in the Strand. This had stood there since the Restoration, but since a great gale in 1672 had been shorn of a third of its height. This evening it was gaily decorated, and a merry throng had gathered round it in spite of the grumbling of the hackney coachmen, who would not budge an inch from their lawful territory, and preferred all the pushing and jostling of the merrymakers to a cession of their rights. Turning into the comparative quiet of Drury Lane, Hugo made his way to Will's coffee-house, which was near Covent Garden, at the western corner of Bow Street. This coffee-house was the great emporium of libels and scandals, but it was one of the best notwithstanding, and had acquired the sobriquet of the 'Wits' Coffee-House.' Hugo often frequented it for the sake of hearing the talk of the poets, authors, and celebrities who were in the habit of meeting there. This evening as he made his way up-stairs in the fading evening light to the chief room he found it crowded. There was an air of ease and liberty about the place, while the faces of those who lounged at the tables were, as a rule, worth looking at. Some were supping, others smoking, others reading the *Observer*, Roger North's spiteful paper, or the Tory and Whig journals of the day. Julian, the drunken and disreputable fellow who was in the habit of distributing the latest lampoons, stood near the door with a sheaf of papers in his hand, many of which were already circulating in the room, and which consisted of some disgusting verses on the Duke of Monmouth. There was a buzz of general conversation, and at first Hugo could nowhere see his

brother in the crowded room. Looking for him, however, he caught sight of Matthew Prior, rather to his surprise—for by rights he should have been at Cambridge—and the old school-fellows shook hands with each other. Prior was a pleasant fellow enough, but already a little spoilt by his high opinion of his own powers and by the patronage of my Lord Dorset.

‘Art looking for old Dryden?’ he asked irreverently. ‘He was here but a half-hour since. Some one happened to breathe a word of Rose Alley, however, and the old gentleman immediately found the room too hot for him.’

A few years before, the poet had been attacked by hired ruffians on his way to his house in Gerard Street, and shamefully beaten. The masked villains escaped, and were never discovered; but every one was aware that the insult had been planned by Rochester, to gratify his private spite. The laureate never heard the last of it, however, and to his dying day his enemies cast the ‘disgrace’ in his teeth.

‘The Rose Alley ambushade disgraced the perpetrators more than the victim to my mind,’ said Hugo, quickly. For although Sydney’s indignation with the ‘Duke of Guise’ had shaken his former admiration of Dryden, yet he was of too generous a nature to tolerate such a reference to the shameful ill-treatment of one who was no longer young.

‘Have you seen my brother?’ he questioned.

‘Ay, there he is in the balcony, and Dryden too,’ said Prior.

Thither, accordingly, Hugo made his way. He found a group of men lounging about the balcony smoking and listening to the talk of an old man in a suit of purple cloth, who sat in the midst of them in the arm-chair which had long been consecrated to his sole use, and which this evening had been moved from the hearth to its summer quarters in the balcony. Apparently they had been speaking of his recent poem, *Religio Laici*; and, as far as Hugo could make out, Randolph, who had not yet perceived him, was urging the poet to write a fresh play, and proving that the stage was the real place from which to teach the people.

‘Ay,’ said the poet, a smile on his wrinkled face. ‘Ay, Betterton, thou art the preacher of the golden age.’

He had turned to a pleasant-looking man of about eight-and-forty, who stood leaning against the window-frame close to Hugo. He was the great tragedian of the day, a man as much beloved for his personal amiability as for his great gifts.

'Nay,' he replied; 'you are the teacher and preacher, I am but the mouthpiece. Nevertheless, Mr. Wharncliffe is right; the stage is the national pulpit.'

'What would our divines say to such a bold statement?' said Dryden. 'They'll be raking up the ancient statute, Betterton, and denying you Christian burial!'

'Nay, that was but in France, an I remember right,' said Betterton, laughing. 'And it was but of late that Dr. Tillotson said to me these very words. Said he, "How comes it about that after I have made the most moving discourse I can, am touched deeply with it myself, and speak it as feelingly as I am able, yet I can never move people in the church near so much as you do on the stage?"'

'And what reply made you?' asked Dryden.

'I replied that it seemed to me easily to be accounted for, since he was only telling them a story, and I showed them facts.'

'A good answer, and true, very true,' said Dryden. 'The stage is a great power! Ha! is not that my silver-voiced youth?' catching sight of Hugo, and nodding pleasantly to him.

Randolph turned to greet him, and was not ill-pleased to see him being made much of by the great poet and the first actor of the day. Hugo took it all, as was his habit, very quietly, and there was a sort of graceful deference in his manner to the elder men which, being quite free from flattery or adulation, had a great charm.

Dryden was pressing him to sing, but the actor, with his ready observation and knowledge of faces, at once perceived that he was hungry and tired.

'Wait till he has supped,' he said, 'and presently let us ask him for the May-day song.' Then linking his arm within Hugo's, he drew him back into the room. 'Come, we will sup together,' he said. 'I too am hungry, and you, an I mistake not, are just off a journey.'

Supper ended, Hugo began to tune the lute which was brought to him by one of the attendants, and then, as Dryden again besought him for a song, he sang, 'Come, lasses and lads,' with so much spirit, and with such rare sweetness of tone, that the whole assembly applauded, and were inclined to grumble when Randolph, at a much earlier hour than usual, took his departure, signing to his brother to accompany him.

Perhaps, considering that all the world was inclined to treat Hugo almost caressingly in deference to his youth and his unassuming modesty, his great talents and his beautiful

face, it was as well for his character that he met with the very reverse of this treatment in his home life.

Randolph walked him home in dead silence—a silence which, though Hugo longed to know the reason of his sudden recall from Penshurst, he did not dare to break. But when they had reached the Temple his guardian's stern brow cleared, and as if returning from an anxious reverie he said abruptly—

‘I have somewhat to say to you, boy. Come with me ; we will take a turn in the gardens.’

‘Jeremiah tells me you have been unwell,’ said Hugo, venturing at last to speak.

‘’Tis true, and partly for that reason I sent for you. But chiefly I sent because I have a letter from Sir Peregrine Blake, and he, very courteously desiring that bygones may be bygones, bids us both to his house, for the coming of age of his eldest son.’

The brothers were pacing up and down the Inner Temple garden, and Hugo was thankful that the place was almost dark, for he could not conceal his annoyance. That he should have been dragged from Penshurst to go down to the Suffolk magistrate's house seemed to him almost intolerable.

‘Surely,’ he began, ‘surely the mere fact of our duel might excuse me from going ; I have no wish to——’

Randolph interrupted him with a volley of oaths.

‘Who asked if you had a wish ? I know naught of wishes in the matter.’ He paused, wondering whether to tell his plans or not.

‘But—’ began Hugo.

‘Not another word !’ said Randolph peremptorily. ‘Be ready to start with me at noon to-morrow, and let me hear no more of this nonsense.’

With that he hastily left him ; but Hugo lingered in the dusky garden struggling with a miserable sense of coming ill which beset him once again much as it had done when he left Penshurst. And the river flowed darkly on, and one by one the stars shone forth in the dim grey skies, and the night wind sprang up, carrying on its breath the scent of the early roses in the garden, drenched with dew. But Hugo heeded nothing, only wrestled despairingly with this phantom of coming ill which nothing would banish from his mind. At length, worn out, he went back to the rooms in King's Bench Walk, but even in sleep the horrible oppression followed him, and he struggled all night in an imaginary net which, as fast as he

broke its meshes, closed up afresh, and eternally baffled his efforts at escape. It was with a momentary sense of rapture that he was roused once again to the world of realities by the familiar bell and the deep voice of the watchman proclaiming, 'Past four o'clock, and a fine, windy morning.'

That hateful net was gone! he sprang up and looked forth. He was free and in his own world, and there was the old watchman in the grey morning light, with his broad-brimmed hat and long coat girt in at the waist, the lantern shedding a sickly yellow gleam on the point of his halberd. There, too, were the familiar trees opposite, and the birds already beginning to quarrel and chatter, and in the distance he could hear the rumbling of market-carts in Fleet Street. Four o'clock—and at noon he was to start on this uncongenial journey. Ah, well! the net of his dreams had passed away, and yet he was environed by a strangely tangled web of circumstances.

CHAPTER XII.

A COSTLY MUMMING.

Oh, that a man might know
The end of this day's business ere it come!
But it sufficeth that the day will end,
And then the end is known.—*Julius Cæsar.*

THE fine windy morning heralded by the watchman, proved to be one of those glorious spring days, when city streets seem well-nigh intolerable, and every one longs for the country. Hurrying to Norfolk Street early in the morning to bid farewell to the Denhams, Hugo met with nothing but expressions of envy, nor did any one but Mary understand his reluctance to be the guest of Sir Peregrine Blake. Spite, however, of his reluctance, Hugo was too young and too impressionable not to feel ere long a certain pleasure in turning his back on the streets of London, and riding out into the open country, not indeed such exquisite country as he had had around him at Penshurst, but rich, level tracts, beautiful with spring flowers, and full of that sense of life and growth which is typical of a mild morning of early May. Larks singing overhead, sparrows chirping in every bush, lambs bleating in the fields, and huge black rooks

swooping about hither and thither with deep caws, supplying the bass as it were to the rural symphony.

Randolph was in an excellent temper, and made no reference to his displeasure of the previous evening. On the contrary, he had never treated his brother more as a friend and companion; they spoke of Penshurst and of Sydney, and, although Hugo said little or nothing of Sydney's political views, Randolph could perceive that his purpose had been carried out, the youth evidently knew much that might prove of great value. This consciousness pleased him so well, that he felt more kindly disposed to his ward than he had done for some time, and by the time they had reached Bishop-Stortford in the cool of the evening, Hugo had quite forgotten the vague dread of the previous night, and was in the seventh heaven of happiness. Very strange was the subtle fascination which attracted him to that strong perverse nature. The mixture of harsh exactingness and real fondness on the part of the elder brother had bound Hugo's loyal heart to his with bonds that nothing could dis sever.

Sleeping that night at Bishop-Stortford, they rode on to Longbridge Hall the following day, arriving just in time for the early dinner. Sir Peregrine had quite recovered from his wound, and treated Hugo with a sort of laughing deference, perpetually referring to the duel in a way which put him to the blush.

Nothing, however, was said of the cause of the strife, fair Mistress Joyce, nor indeed did any one refer to Mondisfield Hall. Once when young Peregrine Blake, the eldest son, had ridden over with Hugo and several of the guests to St. Edmondsbury, on a Wednesday, Hugo for a moment fancied that he saw Joyce among the gay throng; it was market-day, and every street was crowded with country folks. But the face only flashed upon him for a moment, and when he turned to look once more he could discern nothing but the back of a brown hood, and the broad linen collar, puffed sleeves, and straight skirts of a gown, which had in them nothing individual. He thought it was indeed Joyce, but he could not feel sure.

After that it must be confessed that she was for the time being driven from his thoughts by the perpetual round of gaiety and amusement kept up at Longbridge Hall, in honour of the birthday of the son and heir. Long days of hawking and fishing, bowls, basset, dancing, and theatricals almost banished from his mind the sweet little Puritan maid. Spite of his forebodings, he greatly enjoyed the ten days' recreation,

and the jovial atmosphere of the country-house in time of festival was new to him.

Randolph continued to treat him with all brotherliness, and allowed him to see that the general homage which he received from the Suffolk household on account of his fine voice and handsome face was pleasing to his fraternal pride. What wonder if he did not in all things rise above the circumstances in which he was placed! what wonder that peril, following on the pleasure, found him unprepared!

One day, when their stay was supposed to be drawing to a close, the whole family were sitting at dinner in the great hall, when, after the meat had been removed, and the chaplain had, in accordance with custom, quitted the table, Hugo was startled by receiving from his brother a signal to rise too. He had always felt sorry for the meek little clergyman, who retired from the table when the pastry and sweetmeats were served, only returning at the end to say grace for the family. It had always reminded him of a negro proverb which he had once heard from the lips of one of the Duchess of Cleveland's black servants,—‘Them what eats kin say grace.’ It had amused him infinitely to see day by day the poor little chaplain decorously giving thanks for what he had *not* received. But what could this signal mean? and what was Randolph saying to Lady Blake?—something about the wager he had mentioned to her, mingled with compliments and apologies.

‘And good luck to you!’ said Sir Peregrine, who already was far from sober—‘good luck to you! We will drink to your success.’

Success! Good luck! A wager! What in the world did it all mean? Bewildered, Hugo followed his brother out of the hall, and up-stairs to their chamber, Randolph at present vouchsafing no explanation whatever. Upon the bed lay two suits of fantastic-looking clothes, much the worse for wear, and reminding Hugo of the suits worn by the strolling musicians who had played a night or two since at the ball.

‘Lose no time,’ said Randolph, concisely. ‘Put on those,’—he motioned to the clothes.

Hugo obeyed like one in a dream. He knew by Randolph's tone that a question would but call forth just such a volley of oaths as his question in the Temple Gardens had done. He dressed obediently, though not without some uneasy wonder as to the real purpose of this extraordinary disguise. Dressing up and all manner of theatricals had, however, been so much the

order of the day of late that there was something familiar about it after all, and he could not help a little amusement when, on looking round, he discovered his grave elder brother transformed into a very foreign-looking fellow, and so altered by the change of wig and dress that he looked a typical strolling musician. Apparently Randolph was not quite so well pleased with his survey of his ward, for he motioned him to a chair and drew forth his large tortoise-shell comb.

‘Your hair will never do like that,’ he said. ‘Now listen to me for a while, and bestow on what I say your careful attention, for it is of no slight importance.’

Hugo, however, instead of listening, gave a sudden exclamation of surprise and dismay, for, as Randolph spoke in quiet, measured tones, he felt some instrument close to his neck, the edge of which was thinner and colder than the comb, and the next moment at one fell swoop his long glossy mane was severed from his head.

‘Good heavens! brother,’ he exclaimed, ‘this passeth a joke. Methinks our mumming is like to prove costly.’

In his tone there was some natural indignation, and Randolph, autocratic as he was, thought it well to make all due apologies.

‘Vex not yourself,’ he said. ‘I would not have done such a thing as it had not been necessary. And see here, I give you on the instant the full money’s worth of those locks of which you have been shorn. Take these fifty guineas, and Rupert Denham shall take you to the crack wig-maker in London the instant we return.’

Hugo passively allowed the gold to be placed in his hand, but he was evidently much more annoyed than he had ever appeared to be before, and the elder brother somehow perceived that the days of his absolute tyranny over his ward were likely to draw rapidly to an end.

‘You deserve some explanation of this summary act,’ he began, diplomatically. ‘And yet, Hugo, I must ask you in the main to trust me. This much, however, I may tell you. I have accepted an enormous wager successfully to carry out a day’s work in the disguise of a strolling musician. Without you I cannot do it; and, believe me, you shall not be the loser, if I can manage all that I wish.’

‘But——’ began Hugo, doubtfully.

‘No buts,’ said Randolph, peremptorily. ‘The buts are for me to think of, not for you to suggest.’

‘I hate your plans and your mysteries!’ broke in Hugo,

passionately, as all the vague dread and the dim suspicion returned to him again with double force.

'Hate them or like them, 'tis all one to me,' said Randolph, coldly. 'I have need of your services and I command them. No more of this ; we lose time. Follow me ; and not another word !'

Chafing under an intolerable sense of injustice, and a consciousness that the toils were closing upon him which he was powerless to break, Hugo followed his brother down a back staircase, typical enough to his mind of the whole proceeding. All had apparently been well arranged. They left Longbridge Hall without encountering a soul, and close to the entrance-gate found their horses waiting for them, ready saddled, and tied to a tree. In dead silence they mounted and rode away, a curious-looking pair—Randolph apparently in high spirits, Hugo vaguely miserable. With his short curly hair, his suit of travel-stained, blue cloth, decked here and there with faded ribbons, and a pair of down-trodden boots, of which he was keenly ashamed, it was impossible to conceive anything more unlike the young gentleman of the period. His very reluctance, and his air of uneasiness, made the disguise yet more effectual, and he looked so precisely the home-sick German whom Randolph desired him to portray, that the elder brother could scarcely suppress a chuckle of amused satisfaction whenever he glanced at him.

'You shall not be forced to tell lies in my behoof,' he said at length, with a touch of merriment in his voice which grated on Hugo. 'A veritable musician from St. Edmondsbury will meet us anon, and you and I will turn them into two German minstrels, and borrow the "ja" and "nein" of our forbears.'

Hugo thought of his ancestor, the brave Count Hugo, and involuntarily he shuddered.

'Come,' said Randolph, 'take it not so soberly. Most lads would enter into the fun with some show of spirit. Denham would enjoy the mumming, and be the life of our party. Don't be a fool, Hugo ! Trust me, this shall all turn to your advantage.'

Perhaps the tone of this last speech did to some extent allay Hugo's fears. He brightened up a little, and began to practise fragments of German talk, and to consider what German songs he could sing. A few years before they had visited their German kinsfolk, who still lived in Count Hugo's old castle, and both he and his brother knew the language well.

Before long they came in sight of a small wayside inn, and here Randolph reined in his steed, and dismounted, bidding Hugo follow his example. An ostler appearing, Randolph gave orders that the horses should be put up, and Hugo, wondering much what was about to happen, entered the inn reluctantly enough. Two men came to meet them in the flagged passage, the landlord, who proved to be one of Sir Peregrine Blake's old retainers, and the musician from St. Edmondsbury, a round-faced, jovial-looking man, by name Peter Pierson, wearing a dress almost exactly similar to that donned by the two brothers. Randolph had told him about the great wager for which he was undertaking this masquerade, and the little man quite entered into the spirit of the thing, and had of course sworn the strictest secrecy. He had brought with him his fiddle, and a viol da gamba for Randolph. Hugo had, at Randolph's request, brought his own lute. Having slung their instruments across their shoulders, and tasted the landlord's home-brewed ale, they set off on their expedition, forsaking the high-road, and following Peter Pierson across country.

Whither? That was the question which filled Hugo's mind. A terror had taken possession of him that Mondisfield might in some way be connected with this strange undertaking. And yet how should strolling musicians have aught to do with that sober Puritan household? It was scarcely possible, and yet the haunting dread would recur to him, and he found himself continually remembering that hurried walk to the Hall on the night of the fifth of October. In vain he tried, however, to distinguish any feature of the landscape which would prove to him that they were in the same neighbourhood. It was just the same slightly undulating country that stretched on and on for miles throughout Suffolk, nor could he anywhere see the grey tower of Mondisfield Church, or the four cross roads, or the brook. He plodded on heavily in his uncomfortable boots, following his brother and Peter, and ever with a growing distaste to the work which lay before him. At length Randolph turned back to him.

'Carry this viol for me,' he said; 'tis mighty heavy.'

Hugo quietly accepted the additional burden, but impatience and vexation as to the expedition itself unloosed his tongue.

'Where are we going?' he said, shortly, and in a tone which demanded an answer.

'Only to a house whither honest Peter is in the habit of going every year,' said Randolph, cheerfully. 'Another

coming-of-age party, and a feast for the tenantry. Odds fish! boy, keep up your heart, 'tis no great thing I have asked of you.'

'What if our disguise be discovered?' asked Hugo.

'An impossibility,' replied Randolph. 'And i' faith there is no disgrace in a little masquerade. Why, it was but lately that the Duchess of Cleveland herself tired as an orange-woman and came down to the Temple. And you yourself know that the queen even dressed up as a peasant-woman and went to a fair.'

'Yes, and was speedily discovered,' said Hugo.

Randolph's tone suddenly changed.

'If you lead to our discovery, I'll never forgive you!' he said, through his teeth. Then recovering himself he added, 'But all will go well. Do merely as I tell you; speak only in German, and discovery is impossible.'

With that he left him and rejoined Peter, while Hugo, relieved of his fears about Mondisfield, followed wearily across fields and through woods, until they emerged into a park where deer were grazing under the oak-trees. Ah! there at last was the house; an avenue of oaks in front, a moat with a slight wooden bridge crossing it, a long, rambling, irregular, Suffolk hall, and surely not Mondisfield. For had not Mondisfield an avenue of elm-trees in front of it? And was not the moat much further from the house, and spanned by an ancient drawbridge leading to the bowling-green?

Hugo gave a sigh of relief as he followed the others across the bridge and up the well-kept garden path to the door where Peter knocked loudly, and Randolph resumed his viol.

A maid opened to them.

'Ah, the musicians from St. Edmondsbury!' she exclaimed, looking well pleased. 'Glad to see you again, Master Peter; here's a fine doings to-day with us.'

'Ay, ay,' said Peter, entering and signing to the other two to follow him. 'In our old quarters, my lass?'

'Ay,' she said, looking curiously at Hugo, 'ay, up in the gallery, master. Why, you've brought some new comrades.'

'Yes,' said Peter, with a laugh; 'foreigners fresh from Germany, and I'll warrant you they'll play you some merry tunes anon.'

'Lord!' exclaimed the girl. 'Did they come from foreign parts? Take some ale, master, before you go up,' she said, turning to Hugo, evidently much struck with his boyish good looks.

He crimsoned, and uttered two or three words in German which entranced her.

‘Lord, how strange he do talk!’ she cried, laughing.

‘He saith he cannot speak your tongue, mistress,’ said Peter, with a grin. ‘No, never mind the ale; we are late, and will go up straight and give them a tune.’

The maid opened a door, which Hugo thought belonged to a cupboard, but it proved to be the entrance to a very narrow, steep staircase, at the top of which was a small room, and beyond this again the old minstrels’ gallery.

Had he not been so desperately uncomfortable and ashamed of this masquerade, Hugo would have been pleased by the picturesqueness of the scene which greeted him when, following his elders, he emerged from the little room into the broad gallery, with its polished floor and massive wooden banisters. Down below in the big hall were ranged long tables, laden with good cheer, and the tenantry were doing ample justice to the annual feast, and looked charmingly comfortable and happy. As it was, however, he shrank as far as possible into the background, and hardly looked at anything, bestowing all his attention on the tuning of his lute. Then Peter handed round the well-worn sheets of paper containing the various parts, and Hugo found that his music was so badly copied that it required all his attention. It was not until a song was demanded that he really looked down at the people. But when, at a signal from Randolph, he stood up to sing a German *Volkslied*, he could not avoid seeing his audience. As he sang, his eyes wandered from one to another in the crowd below; he had never sung before to such a rustic assembly, and the open-mouthed astonishment, and the grins of delight at the novel German song, could not fail to amuse him. It was not till the last verse that he looked quite to the further end of the long hall, where, in the doorway leading to some other room, there stood a group of girls, listening. These no doubt were the daughters of the house, and instinctively his eyes travelled rapidly from one to another, till with a shock, that for the time being almost paralysed him, they rested on Joyce Wharnccliffe.

There she stood, hand in hand with Evelyn, her little figure drawn up to its full height—for was not this the festival day of the whole year, and did not the new blue gown demand a stately deportment? Her short waves of sunny brown hair, her wide-opened blue eyes, her piquant little mouth, looked just as they had looked on that autumn Sunday when Hugo

had last parted with her. Good heavens! for what purpose had Randolph brought him to this house—this house, which, after all, must be Mondisfield, approached, perhaps, from the back instead of the front! A deadly faintness stole over him, an oppression from which no effort could free him; his voice wavered, his lips refused to form the words of the song, wreaths of white mist seemed to float suddenly across the hall, and he broke down.

Presently, above the confused babel of voices in the hall below, above Peter's fiddling, above Randolph's muttered remonstrances, Hugo became aware of steps ascending the little staircase. Peter stopped his tune and turned round to greet an elderly nurse who stepped into the gallery bearing a tankard of hot spiced ale, and followed rather shyly by Joyce and Evelyn.

'So, Master Peter,' she began, 'has he fainted, your young foreigner? My mistress bade me carry him this ale. Poor lad, you've over-tired him with the long walk.'

Hugo accepted the tankard, glad of anything in which he could for a moment hide his face, and conceal the agony of shame, and fear, and perplexity which swept over him.

If only those blue eyes would not look at him with such compassion, he could have borne it better.

'How tired he looks!' said Joyce. 'And oh, see, Evelyn, how fine a lute he has! no wonder it sounded so sweetly. Shall I ask him to let us look at it?'

She drew nearer.

'I hope you are better,' she said, kindly, speaking quite as courteously to him in his character of poor musician as she had done six months before, when in very different attire he had lain back on the grass while she bandaged his wound.

He made the briefest of replies in German, and she turned to Peter.

'Does he only speak his own tongue?' she said. 'Ah, then, good Master Peter, make him understand, please, how sorry all the people are, and that we hope he will rest and perchance be able to sing to us later on.'

'He can but speak his own tongue, lady,' said Peter, pulling his forelock, 'but he can understand what is said to him. How now, Karl; look up, my man, the young lady would fain hear you sing again. Thou'lt soon be fit, eh?'

An insane longing to throw aside all disguise, to proclaim himself Joyce's kinsman, nearly overmastered Hugo, and Randolph read his thoughts. He turned to him with a look so

fierce that Joyce involuntarily stepped back a pace, and with angry gestures and a torrent of German, of which she could not understand a word, he thrust the lute back into his brother's hand and bade him at once resume his duties.

'He shall sing anon,' he said, with a very foreign accent, turning to Joyce. But the smile on his face contrasted so unpleasantly with the look she had just before seen on it that she shrank away from him, and was not sorry to quit the gallery altogether, so violent was the antipathy which she all at once conceived for him.

The thought of the tired lutist a little interfered with her pleasure, and even when the country-dances began and delightful music, delightful motion, delightful excitement and novelty kept her radiantly happy, she would every now and then give a glance towards the gallery, and wonder how poor, tired Karl and his cross father were feeling. It was a puzzling world where some must fiddle for others to dance to, however weary or ill.

After a time, when there was a pause in the dancing, came some more songs, and Joyce, standing by her father, watched the singer intently. He sang well, yet not as he had sung at first; there was now an amount of effort in his singing which to Joyce quite spoilt the pleasure of hearing him. He sang coldly, resolutely, as if he had made up his mind to go through with it, however much it cost; and he stood rigidly still, seeming to notice nothing.

'He has a fine face,' said Colonel Wharncliffe. 'How strange it seems to see once more the fashions of my youth! Short hair is to my mind more manly than these long locks and portentous wigs. The German youth sets us a good example.'

After that came more dancing, and the musicians in the gallery were kept hard at work until the time came for the finale of the evening, the speech by Colonel Wharncliffe, and the drinking of healths. The evening had now closed in, the red curtains had been drawn across the two huge windows, lamps and candles had been lighted in the old hall, and the tenants stood in groups listening to the few words which the colonel never failed to say to them each year.

But for once in her life Joyce did not listen. For looking up to the gallery where candles were also burning, she could plainly see the German lutist through the wooden banisters, and there was something in his face which diverted her attention from her father's speech. She had a strong impression

that she had seen him before, and kept puzzling her brain to remember where it could have been. He sat now a little apart from his companions, rigidly still, and with a sort of blank hopelessness in his face which startled her. He never moved, he never even looked to the right or to the left. What story belonged to that face? she wondered. Perhaps he was thinking of his own country and wishing himself there; perhaps he was planning an escape from that cross father. And even in all the bustle and confusion of departure, when the tenants were putting on their hats and cloaks, Joyce still was able to observe the last of the two Germans. Honest old Peter had hastened away to see if supper was being brought for them, and the elder man stood with one hand on his viol and the other on the lutist's shoulder, as though he held him against his will that he might the better talk with him. The light shone full on the face of the younger, and even at that distance Joyce could see how miserable he looked. It was the misery of one who struggles, but, lacking confidence, struggles without hope.

'To bed, my little Joyce, to bed,' said her father, 'or you will be over-weary.'

And Joyce was fain to obey, though she longed to know how that talk between the musicians would end. Turning for a last look at them as she quitted the hall, she saw that they still kept the same position, but, rather to her dismay, she found that the younger one was aware she had been watching them, for his eyes rested upon her now, and the sadness and despair in them seemed to strike to her very heart. She ran swiftly up-stairs, half blinded by tears, which, though she could not have explained them, somehow made her feel ashamed.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FALL.

Judge not thy friend until thou standest in his place.

RABBI HILLEL.

It was night. The tenants had long since departed. The tired servants were all asleep. The whole family had retired, and every light in the house, save one, was out. That one

light burnt in a dark lantern belonging to Randolph, and it stood on the floor of the little room which led to the musicians' gallery. From time immemorial, old Peter and his companions from St. Edmondsbury had supped and slept in this room on the night of the twelfth of May. Colonel Wharncliffe would not hear of allowing them to tramp all the way back to St. Edmondsbury, and this small room, which was never used by any one else, served as a shelter for the musicians. Its accommodation was certainly the reverse of luxurious ; it contained nothing but a rough table and a few benches, and old Peter, very drowsy after the deep potations in which Randolph had encouraged him, was sleeping soundly on the bare floor, rolled up in his blue cloth cloak, and with a fiddle-case by way of pillow. At the table, with both arms stretched across it, and his face hidden, sat Hugo. It was a long time since he had moved. Randolph half thought he must be asleep ; he sat watching him with an expression of mingled anxiety and contempt, and waited impatiently until he heard the clock in the hall strike twelve. At the sound a slight movement was apparent in Hugo's shoulders, and at length he raised a face in which there was no trace of sleepiness, nothing but a look at once apprehensive and reluctant. He had promised to follow Randolph, but to what, or for what purpose, he had not the slightest idea.

'Take off your boots,' said the elder brother.

He obeyed, and followed Randolph through the door which led to the little staircase, a most steep and precipitous descent, down which they had to creep with the utmost caution. At length, twisting sharply to the right, they found themselves at the foot of the stairs, and Randolph endeavoured to open the door which led into the passage beyond. Cautiously he turned the handle ; turned it first one way, then the other, but all to no purpose. Beyond a doubt the door had been locked upon them. He swore a deep oath under his breath, and remounted the stairs. They led on higher than the gallery. He noiselessly crept up, and tried the upper door. That too was securely locked. Evidently, while showing his hospitality and thoughtfulness for the musicians, Colonel Wharncliffe took good care not to trust them imprudently. The brothers stood motionless for a minute on the staircase. Upon Hugo's face there was written unmistakably an intense relief. Randolph, catching sight of this expression, flushed with a sudden anger, and, as if all at once gaining a solution to his difficulties, he cautiously crept back to the little room, and motioned to

Hugo to follow him into the gallery. Then he turned and closed the half-glass door, so that Peter should not be disturbed by their movements.

What in the world was he going to do? He walked to the front of the gallery, and looked down over the broad wooden rail at the top of the banisters. As far as he could judge in the dim light, the floor of the gallery was about nine or ten feet from the ground in the hall below, the wooden railings not more than four feet high. The survey seemed to satisfy him.

‘You are a fair athlete,’ he said in a low voice, turning to Hugo. ‘And since my climbing days are ended, I must trust this matter to you.’

‘What matter?’

‘An affair of supreme concern both to ourselves and to the country.’

‘I would fain serve my country in other ways than by stealing at night through other men’s houses,’ said Hugo, bitterly.

‘Possibly you may live to do so, but at present your duty is to obey me,’ said Randolph, coldly. ‘Listen, for the fewer words we have the better. I know, on certain evidence, that in this house there are hid treasonable papers, papers that might be of infinite service if exposed. You will probably find them either in the room immediately opposite us—where we saw the conspirators last year—or you will find them in the chamber they call the south parlour, for which you must search. Examine all receptacles; be careful to overlook no secret drawers, and look well to see whether any of the panels are so arranged as to slide back.’

During all this time, Hugo had listened indeed, but his face had given evidence of the feelings that were struggling within him. What! was he to do this—this shameful thing in the house of Joyce’s father? Bring ruin upon him? Bring sorrow to her? Never!

‘I cannot do it,’ he said, in the tone of one who is being tortured.

A flat refusal such as this from Hugo meant a great deal. Randolph saw at once that he must take strong measures.

A shade came over his dark face; he quietly drew out a pistol, and cocked it.

‘I am fond of you,’ he said calmly, perhaps failing to see the irony of his words, while he grasped his brother firmly in one hand, and held the pistol to his head with the other. ‘I

am fond of you, Hugo, but unless you swear to me that you will do as I tell you,—by heaven, I'll blow out your brains this moment.'

'That would scarce serve your turn,' said Hugo, quietly. 'Murderers can scarce inherit a fair estate.'

'Fool!' cried Randolph. 'Do you think I could not make it appear that you had killed yourself! Ay, I would willingly swear you did; for, in truth, a refusal would be self-murder. Come, make your choice and be quick. Save the honour of your family, save your country from ruin, or else go to instant death, and be by all men deemed a suicide.'

Hugo's breath came fast and hard; a frightful choice lay before him! And he was young, and life was so sweet; and to die thus by Randolph's own hand seemed intolerable! Good heavens! what would avail him?

To call to Peter for help would never do,—the whole household would be roused by a call loud enough to awaken the old musician after the amount of home-brewed ale he had consumed. In despair, he glanced around for some means of escape, but escape there was none. The dim light from the lantern just sufficed to show the great emptiness of the hall below; the broad gallery, with its quaint old pictures and its massive balustrades, caged him hopelessly, and the face of his guardian, hard, fixed, grim as fate, confronted him pitilessly.

There was no help, no hope, nothing but death—and death at the hands of the man who was nearest him in all the world!

Inevitably the old tie, the bond of loyal obedience, held him fast in this extremity. Only once in his whole life had he disobeyed Randolph. Could he do so now?

Alas! contrasted with the misery, and the death, and the wrath of his guardian, imagination all too quickly painted a possible alternative. He might obey, and search, and, after all, there might be no papers. If papers were found they might not, after all, prove treasonable. They might not implicate Joyce's father. The Government might not think them worthy of notice. A loophole of escape seemed to lie in this direction. He wavered, looked up once again into the stern face above him, to see if any mercy lay hid there. But he knew only too well that what Randolph said, that he meant—knew that, his mind once set on any object, he would pursue it, cost what it might!

'The time waxes short,' said Randolph, sharply. 'Speak quickly and make your choice.'

Vaguely Hugo felt that if the circumstances had been only

a little different he could have withstood longer, could even perhaps have chosen, as he knew he ought to have chosen, the death at the hands of his brother. But the horror of the semi-darkness, the utter helplessness, the loneliness and eeriness of that awful scene in the dead of night, the impossibility of self-defence, the very quietness of voice which was so imperatively necessary, and which strangled the arguments that with free scope for speech he might have used, all this paralysed him.

‘I will,’—there was a pause, a slight struggle,—‘I will—obey you.’ The words were scarcely above his breath. Randolph required something more definite than this.

‘Swear that you will search thoroughly,’ he said, not lowering his pistol. ‘Swear it on—’ he felt for his sword, which had of course been left at Longbridge Hall with his own clothes, then looked round for some other sacred emblem. ‘Swear it on this cross.’

He pointed to a picture close beside them. It was of a nun, probably some member of his own family, painted years ago. Her face was young and fair, with sweet, calm eyes, and a mouth which looked as if it had learnt stern self-control in a hard school. About the face there was an indescribable expression of peace and content. In her hand she held an open breviary, round her neck there hung a cross.

‘Swear it on this!’ reiterated Randolph, dragging him up to the picture.

And, ever with the pistol held close to his temple, Hugo hurried through the words which he loathed.

‘I swear that I will search thoroughly, and will bring you all I find, so help me God.’ As his right hand rested against the painted cross, he could have sworn that the nun looked at him with grief and reproach in her eyes. He turned away, his heart heavy as lead. But Randolph startled him by a sudden embrace.

‘God bless you, lad!’ he exclaimed. ‘You have relieved me from an awful task.’

There was genuine relief in his face; he would assuredly have blown his brother’s brains out had he disobeyed, but yet it would have cost him much to do it. For there were strange gleams of humanity about Randolph, for all his brutality and his tyrannical love of power.

Those few words restored a certain amount of animation to Hugo; all his anxiety now was to get through his hateful task speedily. At any other time he would have thought

twice about climbing down such a break-neck place. Now, even in the semi-darkness, and with everything against him, he cared not a rush.

Before Randolph could offer another suggestion he was over the banisters, the next moment his hands were on a level with the gallery floor, his feet feeling for the small foothold which might be hoped for on the capital of one of the wooden pillars at the entrance from the outer passage. Finding that, he cautiously lowered first one hand, then the other, swung for one moment in mid-air, then let himself drop, alighting with very little noise on the flags.

Well pleased with his promptitude, Randolph let down the lantern by a piece of cord, and from his vantage ground in the gallery, watched the dark figure stealing noiselessly to the other end of the hall, and disappearing into the room where the meeting of the fifth of October had been held.

Once fairly set to work, Hugo moved with great swiftness and precision; he was true to his oath, moreover, and sought thoroughly; opened the book-case, opened the drawers of a cabinet, turned over papers, and briefly examined them. He found nothing, however, but cookery receipts, methods of clear-starching, Latin exercises, and pencil-drawings, evidently the possessions of the daughters of the house. In the lowest drawer, which opened with a spring, he did indeed find a more questionable-looking collection of sheets, stitched together, closely written, and tied with red tape, but on opening them he saw written in a round, clear handwriting,—‘Journal of Joyce and Evelyn Wharnccliffe in the year of our Lord 1682–3. For the benefit of the descendants of the Randolph Wharncliffes.’

This statement so bewildered him, and he was so horrified at the idea of touching Joyce’s private possessions, that he hastily tied the papers up again. Was it not here, in this very room, that he had seen her in ghostly array on that memorable October night? What if she should come now—come and find him prowling about the house like a thief! Oh, that he was through this despicable task! Quickened by the thought, he closed the drawer and rapidly surveyed the panels of the wall, while all the old portraits of the ancestors glared down at him, following him everywhere with their staring eyes. At the picture of Colonel Wharnccliffe, and at the picture of Joyce herself he actually dared not look, but there was one old man near the door, in the dress of a sheriff, and an Elizabethan ruff, whose eyes he could not evade; he

had a long, lean, ghostly-looking hand, pointed eternally downwards, and it seemed to Hugo's excited fancy that he indicated with scorn the place for which he deemed this treacherous guest fit.

At length the search was completed. In this room there was nothing that would serve Randolph's purpose. Opening another door, Hugo found himself in the withdrawing-room, but here there was no question of finding papers; the room was little used, and was stiffly set round with high-backed chairs covered with beautiful crewel-work on a black ground. There was not a single receptacle, however, which could by any possibility have concealed valuable papers.

Once more he emerged into the hall, searched a Japan cabinet which stood near the hearth, signed his want of success to Randolph, and went to seek the south parlour.

And here, alas! success—the success he so little desired—awaited him. Just as he was leaving the room, he noticed a difference in some of the panels, and, setting down his lantern, he tried whether they would move; to his dismay, three of the panels yielded to his touch; they were very heavy to raise, and they made much more noise than he desired, but a glimpse of books and papers within forced him to proceed. At length he had raised them some way, and, bringing the lantern close to the opening, he saw a deep recess, in which was stored on one side some legal documents, with which he did not meddle, on the other a pile of manuscripts, which upon examination proved, alas! to have direct bearing upon the political condition of the country.

Here in very truth was evidence against Colonel Wharncliffe, for in those times to conceive of remedies against the Stuart tyranny was a matter of life and death, and people could not air their favourite theories, or proclaim themselves Republicans at their pleasure. Hugo could tell by the merest glance at the contents of the manuscript that Colonel Wharncliffe would be placed in the greatest peril by their discovery.

With a stifled groan, he drew the papers forth, closed the panels, stole once more into the hall. Good God! why had he chosen life? Why—oh, why had he not taken the truly manly course, and refused to have any hand in this treachery, cost what it might?

Loathing himself, he tied the papers together with the cord which Randolph lowered, and saw them drawn up into the gallery. The cord came down again, this time for the lantern. He let this be drawn up too. Then he stood alone in the

dark hall, feeling as though, had he but had the means, he would fain have hanged himself.

There was a strange beating sound in the hall beside him. How now! Had some one heard him? Should he be discovered? In an agony of shame he shrank back, but, after all, it was only the noise which the clock made before striking one. He had spent just one hour, but in that brief space he had committed a crime the effects of which would last throughout his life.

‘Come up,’ said Randolph, in a whisper. ‘Why lose this time?’

And Hugo did begin the ascent, but either hurried too much or cared too little for his own safety; for suddenly, while with one hand he grasped the lower part of the gallery banisters, his feet slid from their insecure resting-place, and he fell with a dull thud upon the white flagstones below.

‘You fool!’ that was the whisper which thrilled through his ears the instant he recovered his senses.

It stung him into prompt action; he got up, but almost swooned, so frightful was the pain.

Randolph, seeing that he was seriously hurt, looked round in despair for any means of helping him; the lantern cord was far too slender, and the gallery was bare of aught else. He rushed into the little room where honest Peter slept, robbed him of his cloak, knotted it securely to his own, and hung them down through the railings. Then came a breathless interval. Hugo struggled gallantly, but every instant he grew more ominously pale. Randolph saw, with something bordering closely on remorse, that his face was convulsed with pain. Would the cloaks give way beneath the weight? Luckily Hugo was but light, and he helped himself manfully. It was with an intensity of relief that at last Randolph grasped the cold hands in his,—at last, with infinite pain, hauled him over into the gallery.

‘What have you done? where are you hurt?’ he asked, apprehensively.

But Hugo was past replying. He lay stretched on the floor of the gallery as one dead—and beside him lay the fatal papers.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOYCE'S JOURNAL.

You cannot barre love oute,
Father, mother, and you alle ;
For, marke mee, love's a crafty boy,
And his limbes are very smalle ;
He's lighter than the thistledoune,
He's fleeter than the dove,
His voice is like the nightingale ;
And oh ! beware of love.

From the Seven Starrs of Witte, 1647.

May, 1683.—Evelyn and I have found but little to record in our journal all through the winter months. The news-letters brought us word that in London the persecution of Dissenters waxed severer, a special effort having been made against them as the time drew nigh to St. Thomas's Day. The church-wardens of most of the parishes named them to the Ecclesiastical Courts, and procured their excommunication. This my father saith was done that they might be incapacitated from voting at the election of common-councilmen to the City of London. Thus the Tory party will procure such a common-council as is fit for their turn, and, having already the mayor and most of the Court of Aldermen on their side, they will then be able to surrender to the king the charter of the City of London.

Since the sixth of October, however, no persecution reached us here at Mondisfield. But, after the sacking of the barn, no more meetings were held there. My father deemed it wiser for us to attend the parish church in the morning, and in the evening a few of those who have the courage to run the risk gather together in the hall, where there is a service held. We girls had first of all to make heavy red curtains for the two great windows, which till now had never had either curtain or shutter. Frances said she felt while making them like the Israelite women who wove the hangings for the Tabernacle. And it is certain that, without them, we should never have felt safe in meeting for worship with over the proscribed number. Even now, when the wind sighs on winter nights, or when the creepers beat against the pane, we start and tremble, and forget the prayer or the sermon, listening, heart in mouth, to the sounds without, and fearing

another of those terrible incursions. This time I fear me there will be no gallant knight to warn us all in time and make escape possible. There is one John Hilton, who, they say, is very widely known as an informer against conventicles.

March proved a hot dry month, but in April we had naught but showers, from which even by Betty's birthday the roads had not recovered. However, the day itself—the twelfth of May—was fine enough, and the tenants were not to be kept from the yearly feast by a little mud. All went merrily, and we had a gayer time than usual, as befitted Betty's coming of age. But to me the chief interest lay in those two foreign musicians, about whom I feel now doubly certain there is some strange story.

The morning after Betty's birthday, Evelyn and I were roused by hearing Nurse and Margery talking together in the passage just beyond our room.

'Here's a pretty coil!' said Margery, my mother's maid; 'the young foreigner lad hath broke three of his ribs.'

'Broke his ribs!' said Nurse, 'and how did he do that, pray? I suppose they got drinking and quarrelling last night. That is the end of feasting and dancing, and fiddling, and I pray God the master will be warned and have no more of such worldly doings.'

At this Evelyn made such an uproarious sign of disagreement, that we lost the next sentence, but by and by we heard Margery say—

'Ay, ay, it was old Peter told me about it, and he saith it was this morning he broke 'em, a-going into the gallery to fetch his lute; he slipped on the polished floor, not being used to such. They have laid the poor chap in the gallery. Peter saith he heard naught till the one who played the viol shook him by the shoulder, and bid him rouse up and help, and then going to the gallery he saw the poor lad lie there looking as white as a clout.'

We knew well enough that this description would carry nurse off, and that we should hear no more, for Nurse loves waiting on sick folks, and that one should look 'as white as a clout' gives him a firm hold on her sympathies.

Therefore we dressed as speedily as might be, and went down-stairs to hear more. All the household seemed in confusion, and every one was either commiserating the poor German lutist, or scolding Tabitha for having put so much bees-wax on the floor. At length my father came down and put an end to the talk by summoning us all to prayers, which

he said must not be foregone, even for this unfortunate accident. We gathered just as usual in the hall, and my father read and prayed. We wondered much if the poor German listened up in his gallery, but none of us liked to look up there to see.

After breakfast my father went up to see what could be done, and a great talk arose as to whether he had best be carried to St. Edmondsbury, where there is a chirurgeon, or whether it would be best for him to lie still, and let Lake the blacksmith see to him. Nurse said that to move him would be dangerous, and that Lake was skilful as a bone-setter, and would know what was amiss, and both Peter and the other German counselled him to lie where he was. But Karl—so they call him—almost put himself into a fever, they say, protesting in German that he must be taken away and not left behind alone. However, all was of no avail, his father fell in with our father's offer of hospitality, and Karl is to stay in the little room off the gallery whither they bore him, not without causing him some pain. Lake, the blacksmith, said it would be impossible to carry him down those steep stairs without great risk, since in the fall he must have wounded his lungs, and so maybe it is well that he is quartered here, only it seems to make him so very unhappy. Father says we must do all we can to teach him English, that he may not feel so lonely. Nurse says he bore the pain of the moving without once flinching, and made no complaints of Lake's rough handling. But I think he must be well used to roughness, for his father seemed quite cruel to him, and, though none could tell what they said to each other in that strange tongue, yet it was easy to see that even when they parted he was denying Karl's earnest entreaties, and that very churlishly. All that day we girls were as busy as could be, helping the servants, who had much to do in cleaning and re-arranging the house after the feast, and also in waiting on poor Karl the lutist. They all seem glad to do what they can for him, however, and no one complains, for he asks for nothing, never murmurs, thanks even the little kitchen-wench most courteously for the least service, and seems only anxious to give as little trouble as may be.

But Nurse says he is sorely troubled, and when she is out of sight she hears him sigh to himself, and at times groan. Then coming back to him she asks him if the pain has grown worse, and he just shakes his head and turns his face to the wall, and makes as though he would sleep. Poor Nurse feels quite anxious about him. She saith it is worse than having a

babe sick, for they, though they cannot speak, can at least tell you what is amiss by their cries, but this poor Karl seems to shut all things up within himself, and she can in no wise understand him.

The little room is so small that there is scarcely room for more than his bed and a table. So as soon as might be they moved him by day into the gallery, lifting him with great care that he might not be shaken. Then my father told us to go and see what we could do for him, and Evelyn and I bethought us of his lute, and asked him to teach us, which he did right willingly. So strange he looked with his short curly hair, and his face all pale and suffering, next to dear rosy Evelyn, with her laughing face and merry ways. I thought they would have made a good subject for a painter; Karl lying there on a mattress propped up with pillows, Evelyn kneeling beside him with the lute, her little plump, brown fingers showing so strangely beside his long, taper white ones, and the afternoon sun shining in upon the pictures of the gallery from one of the hall windows, and sending a wide beam of light in betwixt the banisters of the gallery, with motes dancing endlessly in it. Watching them thus, and thinking how a painter would put them on his canvas, it suddenly came over me why I always fancied that I must have seen Karl before. From the first there was something familiar to me in his great broad forehead and dark grey eyes. And now I saw that he was extremely like the young gallant to whom we owe so much. He looks older and paler, and has a foreign air, but he is like him—so much like that, were he not a wandering German minstrel, I should deem that it must be he himself.

The next afternoon a strange thing happened. We were sitting beside him, and had finished our lesson on the lute, and Karl, looking somewhat less miserable than usual, was telling us the German names for some of the things around, for a chair, a table, and so forth, when Evelyn suggested that he should look all round the hall and tell us the names of everything he could see. We began with the pictures. The parrot picture close to the gallery, the group of meat and fruit and eatables, that hangs over the hearth, and the man struggling in the waves with the burning ship in the distance, and the strange figures waiting to receive him on the shore. Karl seemed to interest himself in this picture, and we read him the motto painted on it,—

‘More than ye rocks amiddys the raging seas,
Ye constant heart no danger dreddys nor fearys.’

The man's face is earnest and full of a strange power. You can almost see him struggling on, always grave, steadfast, and untiring. At length we came to the picture of the little babe above the door of the north parlour.

Karl taught us the German for 'little child,' and then we, to amuse him, told him the tale of how the picture was saved from the great fire of London, and how it was the portrait of our kinsman, Hugo Wharncliffe, brother to the Randolph Wharncliffe who would one day turn us out of our dear home. And we told him of our journal which we were writing for the 'descendants.' Now, what happened to Karl at that precise moment I never could tell. Perchance it was merely that some movement hurt him suddenly, but a most terrible look came over his face, and we thought he would have swooned. Evelyn would have hurried away in search of Nurse, had he not signed to her to sit down again, and presently he seemed to recover himself, though he continued very pale all that afternoon. Nor can I forget the strange, doubtful, troubled look he gave me—as though he would fain speak but could not. We must indeed do all in our power to teach him English, but he doth not greatly care to learn, at least so it seems to me. 'Tis passing strange, for in his face is always the look of one who longs to say something, yet cannot.

My father is much interested in him, and wishes he could converse with him; but that of course is difficult, indeed well-nigh impossible. Moreover, Karl seems to shrink from him, almost to fear him, which is strange, seeing how kind and gentle our father is with him. What he seems to like best is that Nurse, and Evelyn, and I should sit in the gallery in the afternoon and go on with our talking and reading just as though he were not there. I am sure he listens to the reading, he lies so still, with his face always towards us, and with a look of content upon it which is rarely there at other times. We have read all through Mr. Bunyan's new book, *The Holy War*, and also for the hundredth time, I should think, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, besides several of Mr. Shakespere's plays, which my father thought would be sure to interest him if he were able to understand them well enough, and this he seems to do.

15th of June, 1683.

No entries in our journal all these weeks, but, indeed, we have been almost too busy to write, and when there have been spare moments I scarce wished to set down what could hardly interest the 'descendants.' For, indeed, Karl has taken up all

our thoughts. My mother says it is very natural that he should be less shy and uncomfortable with Nurse and with us children than with my father or herself. She says it is because he is of different station that he doth not feel comfortable in their presence, and that he looks upon me just as a child, and so does not feel embarrassed by the difference in our birth. It is true all the world looks upon me as a child still, and I am glad it should be so, if to be counted as a grown woman would make Karl afraid of me.

I understand him less than ever, and I am not quite sure that he always does listen to the reading, as I thought he did. Three times of late, when I have looked up suddenly from the book to ask him some question, I have found his eyes fixed so strangely on my face, and at one time, though I read the saddest part of the tale, there were his eyes shining with a sort of happy look that I never saw in eyes before. It is true it passed away very swiftly, leaving him as usual grave and troubled; but what business had he to be looking like that when Evelyn and Nurse were ready to weep over the death of the hero? I cannot get Karl out of my thoughts; he puzzles me greatly. But methinks it were perhaps wiser to write no more of him, and therefore I shall shut up the journal in our drawer in the north parlour until he has gone, which is like to be soon, since he is getting well.

CHAPTER XV.

CONFESSIO.

Mistake no more : I am not Licio,
Nor a musician as I seem to be ;
But one that scorns to live in this disguise.

Taming of the Shrew.

VERY strangely had that long month passed as far as Hugo was concerned. He alternated between a despair at the thought of the certain misery which must fall upon this peaceful household when Randolph had disclosed his secret, and a feverish happiness caused by Joyce's presence. To lie there helplessly, able to watch the beautiful family life going on around him, and ever with the consciousness that his own act

would soon shatter this happy home, was almost more than he could endure. And yet, painful as it was, the sight of that home-life fascinated him. He had never known real family life; he had no conception of what a pure, genial home might be. The simple country customs, the common interests so keenly shared, the home loyalty, the loving pride in each other's successes, the pure laughter, the innocent jests, the girlish merri-ment, and the games into which no bitterness entered, all these were new to him. Again, the religious element underlying all struck him greatly. The daily assembling of the household in the hall, the slow, solemn reading of the chapter from the Bible, the everyday language of the prayer offered up by Colonel Wharncliffe, and afterwards the repeating of a verse by every child, from Elizabeth, whose coming-of-age festival had been the cause of all his trouble, to little ten-year-old Evelyn.

Still more impressive were the Sunday evening services, which he watched very curiously from his gallery.

He was now almost well, and was allowed to move about a little. If Randolph did not, as he had promised, either come for him or send for him, he was determined to leave Mondisfield in a few days' time, and try to make his way back to Sir Peregrine Blake's.

It was Sunday evening, the 17th of June. Hugo was sitting as usual in his musicians' gallery, and looking down to the familiar hall, with its white-flagged floor, which had served him so churlishly, its carved oaken settle and stately high-backed chairs set at intervals round the wall. At the table in the middle sat Colonel Wharncliffe, turning over the leaves of the great Bible. Benches were set for the few outsiders who ventured to the service, and for the servants, while near the hearth sat Mrs. Wharncliffe and her daughters, Joyce in her customary corner close to the tall clock. The evenings were now so light, that to have drawn the red curtains would but have excited greater notice, and the little congregation met in some fear, keeping ever a sentinel at the window to warn them of the approach of any danger. It seemed to Hugo that Joyce was the most nervous, and yet the most courageous of the party. He used to watch her very narrowly during those services. The alert, watchful, anxious look on her sweet, childish face touched him greatly.

The hour for service had struck, and there was the customary sound under his gallery of the trampling of thick boots as the country-folk made their way from the kitchen to

the hall. But on this Sunday, instead of taking their places as usual, the Nonconformists stood in a group, and Hurst, the gardener, went across to Colonel Wharncliffe.

‘If you please, sir,’ he said, quite loud enough for all present to hear,—‘If you please, sir, a special post has been through the village, they say, and he has brought news of a plot to kill the king, which they do say was planned by the Whigs, sir.’

Colonel Wharncliffe looked up quickly.

‘To kill the king?’ he said, incredulously.

‘Ay, sir,’ replied Hurst; ‘to kill the king and the duke too, sir.’

‘Who heard the news at first hand?’ asked the colonel, looking from one to another of the little group.

‘I, sir,’ said the village cobbler, stepping forward.

‘And I, sir,’ repeated another villager, younger and more impulsive-looking.

‘What was the exact news?’ said Colonel Wharncliffe; and Hugo from his gallery tried hard to read his grave face, but could not.

‘The post brought word, sir, that all London was in alarm at the revealin’ of a plot to kill the king, sir.’

‘And the Duke of York,’ added the cobbler.

‘Ay, and the duke too. The plot was revealed by two brothers, sir; at least, they say the younger was forced to it by his brother against his will.’

Hugo gasped, and clutched at the railings for support.

‘Did the post mention any names?’ said the colonel.

‘Ay, sir. Keeling was the name of the two brothers; and they say the eldest he was a salter in the City, and thought to take a leaf out of Dr. Oates’ book.’

At this Hugo breathed more freely. There had then been others reluctantly forced into this hateful work of playing the spy, and he, at any rate, was not responsible for the general revelation. But, alas! he was responsible for the danger that would now more than ever threaten Colonel Wharncliffe.

‘And when was the plot to have been carried out?’ said the colonel. ‘Said he naught of that?’

‘Ay, sir, that he did,’ said both, in a breath. ‘The king was to have been stopped on his way back from Newmarket, sir, in a narrow part of the highway, nigh upon Mr. Rumbold’s house at Rye.’

‘And both were to have been killed, sir,’ said the cobbler, ‘both the king and his brother, and they do say it would have

been done in the spring but for the fire at Newmarket, and the king going back sooner than expected.'

'And some say that it was but put off till next Queen Elizabeth's day,' chimed in the younger man.

'Said he aught of those arrested? Named he any well-known men?'

'No names, sir, but he spoke of arrests that were being made, and said that warrants were being issued whereby all suspected of not favouring the king might be had up.'

Colonel Wharncliffe seemed to meditate for a few moments; then, looking up once more, he thanked the men for their information, and said they would now proceed with the usual service.

The excitement soon died away, and a great calm fell upon the little assembly as Colonel Wharncliffe read of the three men who would not bow down to the great image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up, and of how, walking through the furnace itself, they found gain instead of loss. After that he prayed long and earnestly for all those who might be in danger through the news of this reported plot; in his prayer was nothing agitated or even anxious,—he was too calm and too good a man to be easily disturbed by evil tidings.

But in the gallery a storm raged. No calm could come to Hugo in his present state. Never even in all these long weeks of shame and misery, had he suffered so acutely as now. The very sight of the peaceful assembly down below seemed to accentuate his wretchedness. How little they dreamed that this was their last Sunday! How little they dreamed that foes were even now seeking the colonel's life! And he had brought it all upon them,—he, the guest, the kinsman, he to whom all kindness and hospitality had been shown, he had betrayed them.

Loathing himself, he looked back in a sort of amaze to think that his own act could have brought him into such a hateful position. Could it indeed be that he had ever had the chance of doing otherwise? It had not seemed in his power to escape from that first stealthy visit to Mondisfield. Had it really been in his power? Had he, through lack of some perception, some thought, some prompt assertion of principle, taken the irrevocable step which must lead to a whole chain of results of which he had never dreamed? And yet again and again there had been moments when he might have turned back. He might have disobeyed Randolph, and refused to

follow him from Longbridge Hall on an expedition which from the first aroused his suspicions. He might have died the death of a martyr in that very gallery, and purchased eternal honour instead of, as now, eternal shame. And now he lay in this furnace of pain, the fiery furnace which he had kindled for himself, and he knew that hell itself could contain nothing more frightful than this looking back on the past with the full consciousness of his failure, and the full consciousness of what that fault of his was bringing upon others. He was in the cleansing fires, and those in the hall below were in the heavenly calm of communion with the Unseen, wrapping them round from all the cares and troubles of the outer world.

The sight of them took him back to that Sunday morning,—a lifetime ago it felt to him now,—when he had seen them in the barn. The old minister had spoken words which he had never forgotten, perhaps because at the time he had so little understood them. ‘Men *can* rise above the circumstances in which they are placed.’ He had not risen; he had been dragged down, was even now being dragged irresistibly down by Randolph’s stronger will. But ‘men *can* rise.’ That was for him in very truth a gospel. From the perception of all that was involved in that ‘can’ he was not long in passing to the ‘I will.’ And above the grave Puritan discourse, above the devils’ voices which mocked him with his own weakness, and with the dangers of the way, there floated in to him the anthem which he had heard from his childhood at the Temple church—‘I will arise and go to my Father.’

Then slowly and by degrees his duty began to dawn upon him. The first step in the upward progress taken revealed the second. It was a hard one. Nevertheless, he took it resolutely, manfully. By this time the congregation were beginning to disperse. Hugo bent forward, caught Joyce’s eye, and deliberately signed to her to come up to the gallery. Then raising himself, he made his way with some difficulty into the little room beyond, and there awaited her.

She came in quickly, with an exclamation of surprise and a smile of eager congratulation.

‘Why, Karl! have you walked in here? ’Tis the first time you have walked alone!’

He was standing beside the window which looked out at the back of the house and right down the oak avenue, where he had last walked with Randolph and Peter.

‘The first time you have walked alone!’ Her words

seemed to him to bear a deeper meaning than she had intended ; he smiled a very little, even in the midst of his pain.

But Joyce was quick at reading faces, and she saw at once that he was suffering.

‘You are worse, Karl. What is the matter?’ she said, a sudden terror taking possession of her as the pain in his face deepened.

‘I begged you to come,’ he began, speaking quickly and yet forcibly ; ‘I desired to see you, that I might confess a grave wrong which I fear will injure your father.’

‘Karl!’ she exclaimed, trembling, ‘you speak English? You knew it all the time?’

‘Call me not Karl!’ he said, speaking with an effort. ‘That name must be for ever hateful to me. Joyce, Cousin Joyce. I am no musician, no German, I am your miserable kinsman, Hugo Wharncliffe.’

‘You are Hugo Wharncliffe!’ she repeated, with a look of utter bewilderment.

‘Ay! would to heaven I were not!’ he said passionately. ‘Would to heaven I were not!’

He turned away, trying to hide from her the rush of shame and anguish that overwhelmed him.

There was a long silence. Presently her voice fell upon his ear. She spoke very gravely, very gently, and there was in her tone a curious touch of sadness as though she knew that behind this strange confession there lay some grievous wrong.

‘Cousin Hugo,’—she just touched his arm—‘Cousin Hugo, you must sit down, or you will over-tire yourself.’

He obeyed her, being in fact scarcely able to stand longer.

Again there was silence. At last Joyce spoke.

‘Why did you seek to injure my father?’ she said, struggling hard to repress the indignation that raged within her.

‘God knows I did not seek to injure him,’ said Hugo.

‘Ah!’—a light broke upon her—‘it was then that other, the one whom we called your father! Ah! I knew—I knew from the first that he was hard and bad and cruel. And I might have known that you would not have done it.’

‘Nay,’ he said, ‘nay, blame him not. If his was the brain to conceive, mine was the arm to execute. Joyce, Joyce, have pity on me! Hate me not; hate the crime, but for heaven’s sake do not hate me!’

‘How could I hate you?’ she exclaimed. ‘I hate you?—I?’

Her sweet eyes met his fully; it was all he could do to strangle the passionate words of love which rose to his lips. But this was no fit moment to speak; with an effort which seemed to rend his very heart, he turned from thoughts of Joyce and of love, to the torturing thought of his crime, and the tardy reparation for which he must strive.

‘Listen to me,’ he said, almost sternly. ‘My brother brought me to this house last October. We overlooked a meeting which was being held here. That assured him of one bit of evidence against your father. He brought me again a month since, to search for surer evidence still. We found ourselves locked into this part of the house. The only way to search the premises was to climb over the gallery, and so into the hall. He bade me do it—I refused. Then he threatened to shoot me on the spot, and—I yielded.’

His voice sank, he writhed under the remembrance, writhed under the torture of confessing his weakness to Joyce.

‘And you found something?’ said the girl.

‘Ay, I found papers which I fear will make it go hard with your father. The greater number my brother bore away with him. But one book of manuscripts was too large for him to carry, and he left it with me till his return.’

He unlocked the case belonging to his lute, and showed her a book secreted there.

‘This at least I can restore,’ he said, ‘this confession I can at least make: your father may yet find safety in flight, and by all that is holy, I swear that I will never give evidence against him.’

Joyce did not in the least realise all that his promise would involve, but there was that in Hugo’s manner which made the tears rush to her eyes.

‘And you would have me bear these tidings to my father?’ she said, gently.

He signed an assent and turned away, too miserable to speak another word.

Joyce stood still for a minute thinking.

‘Cousin Hugo,’ she said presently, ‘tell me one thing: I think it must have been you who fought that bad man last October outside the park; I think—I feel sure it was you who warned us that Sunday in the barn. Is it not so?’

‘God bless you for remembering!’ he exclaimed passionately. And turning, he hastily raised her hand to his lips and kissed it.

‘Be not too miserable,’ she said; ‘be glad at least in this, that this has happened with our father rather than with one of harder nature. Oh! he will be very good to you, he will bear no malice.’

And with this comfort she left the room, while Hugo flung himself down on the bed, well aware that the kinsman’s forgiveness would be worse to bear than blows.

He waited long in an agony of shame and remorse. The room was now almost dark, and in the soft grey of the midsummer sky he could see stars shining out one by one. Presently the door at the foot of the staircase was opened, and some one came up bearing a lamp. He listened apprehensively. It was a man’s tread, it was doubtless Colonel Wharnccliffe. Burying his face in the pillow, he waited motionless while the steps drew nearer and nearer. Could he now have felt the cold muzzle of Randolph’s pistol once more at his head, he would have welcomed it and courted death.

He heard his kinsman enter and close the door behind him, then he also closed the half-closed door which led into the gallery, then he set down his lamp and drew a chair to the bedside.

Still Hugo did not move a muscle.

‘My daughter Joyce has delivered your message to me,’ he began, in his grave voice.

A sort of shudder passed through the form on the bed.

‘My poor lad,’ continued the colonel, ‘I am right grieved for you. Your mother, a noble lady whom I loved well, would have been sore at heart could she have foreseen this day.’

An uncontrollable sob escaped Hugo. Such a reference at such a time was almost more than he could endure.

‘Do not for one moment think that I blame you,’ said the colonel. ‘God forbid that I should judge you in aught. And indeed I can well perceive how cruelly your circumstances made for your fall. I blame you not, I will never blame you.’

‘Kill me not with kindness!’ said Hugo, starting up and revealing his haggard, agitated face. ‘Rather blame me, for I am to be blamed.’

‘Nay,’ said the colonel, gravely. ‘Christ permitted us not to rebuke those who, having offended against us, have repented. For such there must be naught but forgiveness. Why, my poor lad, who would be benefited by blame or rebuke? Already you know full well all that your wrong-doing will bring to pass. What need of words of mine?’

For a few moments there was silence. Hugo, keenly conscious of the contrast between this man's noble generosity and his own treachery, humbled to the dust by the perception of his own meanness, was yet irresistibly attracted to his kinsman. We hate those whom we injure just so long as we do not repent of the injury. But the forgiver by his very divineness attracts.

'If you will only conceal yourself,' began Hugo, eagerly. 'There is yet one thing that I can do, to make some sort of reparation, though that indeed is too great a word for such slight amends.'

'Joyce mentioned to me something of the sort. She says that you propose not to give evidence against me.'

'That is the least I can do,' said Hugo, quickly.

'I could not let you make such a sacrifice,' said the colonel. 'You are very young, you hardly realise what it would involve.'

'Sir,' said Hugo, 'sacrifice is hardly a suitable word as between yourself and me. Torture me not by refusing to accept the only amends in my power. It is no question of sacrifice, but of plain duty.'

'Nobly spoken,' said the colonel. 'Yet remember that this course will bring you into certain trouble. You will incur imprisonment, and our prisons are such hells on earth that I shrink from the thought of such a thing for you.'

'Think not of me!' broke in Hugo, passionately. 'Why will you speak of naught else? I am outside the question altogether. Think of your own safety, of your wife, of your children. Escape or hide while there is yet time.'

'You speak your innermost heart in all truth?' questioned the colonel.

'Yes, a thousand times over,' said Hugo. 'Think of them, and let me bear the natural consequences of what I have done. Bring hither a Bible and I will swear to you never to breathe aught against you.'

'Nay,' said the colonel, 'an oath is no more sacred than a promise. I will trust your word. I hold not in all things with the Quakers, but yet it seems to me that the reckless swearing of these days imports an element of profaneness even into an oath taken with due solemnity. I will trust your word.'

'Then,' said Hugo, firmly, 'I promise that I will never give evidence against you. I thank you for your trust.'

He fell back again on the bed, exhausted by all that he

had passed through, but yet feeling already a lessening of the intolerable load which had for so long weighed upon him.

They fell to talking of the news from London, and the colonel explained to Hugo his views, which were almost identical with those of Sydney. Of the plot to murder the king and the duke he had heard not a single word, and, since plots were in those times so often the mere fabrication of the enemies of the accused, he was inclined to discredit it altogether.

The two talked far into the night, Hugo telling his kinsman of his acquaintance with Colonel Sydney, of his stay at Penshurst, of his London life, and of his relations towards his brother. The colonel grew more and more interested in a character which seemed to him so full of promise, and so cruelly fettered by its surroundings. A youth who had kept himself from all grossness in the court of King Charles was indeed almost a phenomenon. And there was no mistaking Hugo's genuine purity of heart and life.

Colonel Wharncliffe was in truth almost diverted from the thought of his own peril by the perception of the great difficulties which lay before this son of his old friend. For himself, he was an old soldier, and had lived through many dangers. Moreover, he was constitutionally brave. It is not always easy, however, for brave people to be brave for others, and he shrank not a little from the thought of all the suffering which lay before his young kinsman, who after all was more sinned against than sinning.

'I have warned the village cobbler to let me know at once should any suspicious-looking party arrive in the village. Therefore, if your brother, with any officer capable of making an arrest, arrives by that road, we shall be warned in time.'

'You will not make your escape at once?' asked Hugo.

'There is no need,' said the colonel. 'I have a sure hiding-place close at hand. Precisely where it is I will not inform you, in order that, if put to the proof, you may with truth deny all knowledge of my movements. And now I will bid you good-night; had I but found before that you were my kinsman, you should have had the guest-chamber. After all, though, I doubt whether we could have safely moved you.'

CHAPTER XVI.

REPARATION.

Love give me strength,
And strength shall help afford.—*Romeo and Juliet.*

LEFT once more to himself, Hugo, still greatly agitated by all he had suffered that evening, found sleep impossible. True, even in the midst of his shame and perplexity, he already felt something of the relief of confession, but with the relief there was a bewildering consciousness that this was only a brief pause, a sort of breathing-space, betwixt his confession and the certain results of his wrong-doing. Another day, a few hours, and he might be a prisoner, with another man's life under the protection of his strength of purpose. A few hours, and he might be born away from Mondisfield for ever! A few hours, and he might have looked his last on Joyce! No wonder that sleep refused to come to his excited brain. Wearily he tossed to and fro on his pallet bed, weighing the probabilities of the future, alternating between wild hopes and ghastly fears, and, worse than all, haunted by the thought that Randolph's will might a second time overpower his, a second time make him a traitor to his conscience. Then he wandered back again to thoughts of Algernon Sydney, and he wondered whether it would be possible to write to him, tell him the whole truth, and ask his advice. Often in these wretched weeks of waiting he had pondered the feasibility of such a plan, but had always been debarred by the impossibility of not writing such a letter as would betray his real character, and prove him not to be Karl, the German lutist.

And now, alas! another obstacle had arisen. He might write a letter in his own character, but to do so would perchance involve Colonel Sydney in his disgrace. At all costs he must not risk that, he must die in silence rather than bring him into danger. If indeed he were not already in danger, as was only too probable.

That he should escape when all the Whigs were suspected, that he should be allowed fair play when there was a chance of seizing him, was indeed a consummation devoutly to be wished, but not in the least to be expected. A plot to murder the king and the duke! Why, Algernon Sydney would be

one of the first to be arrested. His foes would be so thankful for any excuse of getting him out of the way. This dangerous man, this avowed Republican, whose murder had again and again been attempted by the court party, who was more feared than anybody, because 'it was known he could not be corrupted;' ¹ that, while others might be bought over to the royal interests, Sydney, sternly incorruptible, would remain for ever true to his own principles.

Hugo could only hope that he might retire to France, and find again safety in exile; but the weary sense of his own helplessness, and the fears which he knew were well-founded, weighed heavily on his heart, while again and again he recollected the grim foreboding of coming evil which had oppressed him at their last parting.

Sydney's words rang in his ears, but they rang now like a death-knell, though at the time they had been cheerfully spoken.

'We shall meet again in London!'

Ay, in London. But where?

It was not until sunrise that sleep came to him, stilling for a time the weary train of apprehensive thoughts. The household was soon after astir, the dairymaid churning, the cow-boy coming in with the morning milk, the gardener mowing the bowling-green, and whistling as he sharpened his scythe. But Hugo was sleeping too soundly to be disturbed; he did not even hear the steps which some time later ascended the little staircase; he did not hear his door open, or know that one stood beside his bed, looking down at him sadly, and with fatherly pity.

Colonel Wharncliffe was obliged to rouse him.

He started up at the sound of his name, and the face so peaceful in sleep instantly resumed its expression of suffering and of strained anxiety.

'I came to bid you farewell,' said the colonel. 'It is as we feared, the cobbler has brought me word that a stranger has arrived this morning at the village inn, and with him Sir Peregrine Blake and two constables, with half-a-dozen men in attendance. They have stopped at the inn, and will breakfast there before proceeding.'

'Escape, then—escape while there is time!' said Hugo, eagerly. 'Why linger here with me?'

'I would have you escape with me,' said the colonel. 'Share

¹ See Sydney's *Apology*. This remark was made by one of his friends, and given in explanation of the great hostility of the court party.

my hiding-place. Even were we found, your fate could scarcely be worse than it will be now.'

'And who would meet my brother?' said Hugo. 'Who would bear the brunt of the inquiries? who would suffer from his wrath? Your wife, perhaps your daughters. Ay! you look incredulous, but you do not know my brother.'

'In that case, I will stay with them myself,' said the colonel, composedly.

'No,' broke in Hugo, passionately, 'you must not, you shall not stay. I beg you—I implore you—let me make the only amends in my power. Have I not given you my word? Would you have me go back from it?'

'My poor lad, I believe that you are indeed as brave and as true—ay, and as faithful to me as my own son might have been. But look you, this will be a hard matter, and you are but young—very young.'

'Not too young to suffer,' said Hugo, resolutely, 'or to hold my tongue. Sir, I thank you for your kindness, but I cannot and will not escape.'

'Then,' said the colonel, solemnly, 'may the Almighty strengthen you and bless you! Farewell, my son.'

He wrung his hand and turned away.

It was not till he had been gone some time that Hugo recollected the manuscript book, which, in all the haste and confusion, had been left behind in his lute-case. He took it forth, hastily re-arranged his dress, then, giving one last look round the little room in which he had undergone so much, he made his way, for the first time since his accident, down the steep stairs, and into the hall.

The first person he met was Joyce.

She was looking very pale and anxious. The thought that he had brought this suffering upon her was almost more than he could endure; but it was no time to think of personal pain, or even of self-reproach. Stifling the words of regret and shame which rose to his lips, he abruptly opened the subject that was of real importance.

'Cousin Joyce,' he said, 'your father bore not with him this book of treatises. It must be hidden right speedily, or we shall be undone.'

She mechanically held out her hand for it, and motioned to him to sit down in one of the high-backed chairs.

'But where can we put it?' she said with bewildered face. 'I can think of naught this morning, my head is so weary.'

‘Could you not burn it?’ said Hugo.

‘There is but the kitchen fire, and the maids are in the kitchen and would see all.’

‘Then tie a stone to it and fling it in the moat,’ he said, decidedly.

Before he could offer his help she had bounded away, found a weight and a cord, tied the book securely, and hurried out bare-headed from the back door. The morning was fine, the hot midsummer sun beat full down upon her as she ran, glancing apprehensively across the water into the park to see if any witnesses were in sight. All was still and peaceful, however, cruelly peaceful it seemed to Joyce. How could the birds sing so distractingly, how could the cattle graze with such provoking calmness, how could all nature bear so composed a face when her father lay concealed within his own house, deeming himself secure indeed, but yet running no small risk of discovery should a thorough search of the premises be instituted? And Hugo! Come what might he must suffer; come what might he must be borne away by the cruel brother who had already once threatened to shoot him, and who was doubtless quite capable of doing the deed! Joyce’s heart felt fit to break as she thought of it, the tears blinded her eyes, but she dashed them away that she might see how best to drop the precious book. For now she stood on the little wooden bridge, and had not Hugo bade her be quick? One more hurried glance around, then she threw the book over the rail and watched it splash down into the water below. In a dull, mechanical sort of way she watched the widening circles in the water as they grew fainter and fainter. Presently all was calm once more, and the book was securely buried in its watery grave. But yet something had happened which made Joyce clutch at the railing of the bridge and turn deathly white. For as the circles died away upon the water a faint, monotonous sound fell upon her ear; she scarcely knew at first whether it might not be the beating of her own heart. She paused and listened once more. Nearer and nearer that dreaded sound was fast approaching—‘One-two, one-two, one-two!’ Horses’ hoofs beyond a doubt! The horsemen who were coming to seek her father’s ruin; the horsemen who would assuredly bear Hugo away.

Well, at least she would tell him the book was safe, at least she would bid him farewell.

Breathlessly she hurried to the hall. Hugo was still leaning back in the chair beside the hearth where she had left him.

‘Cousin Hugo,’ she exclaimed, ‘it is safe, but, oh, I hear the sound of horsemen in the distance!’

Her face was blanched with fear.

‘Will you not trust me?’ he said, quietly. ‘I would sooner die than betray your father.’

‘Trust you!’ she cried. ‘Ay, I would trust you before all the world. But, oh! Cousin Hugo, it is for you that I fear. What may they not do to you?’

‘I cannot tell,’ he replied; ‘I do not wish to think. It is enough for me if I can by silence shelter you. Sweet cousin, do not weep; your tears pain me far more than can their blows.’

Betty and Damaris joined them ere more could be said, and Joyce dried her eyes and crossed the hall to look forth from the window.

‘They come!’ she cried, after a minute’s silence, during which Hugo had been trying to understand how the other girls regarded him, whether their trust in his honour was as complete as Joyce’s. There was a stir and a commotion all through the house; the members of the family gathered together in the hall, some looked apprehensively at the approaching horsemen, some looked at the slight boyish figure in the chair by the hearth, upon whom their fate depended. Poor Mrs. Wharncliffe sighed as she looked. He was so young, so little able to resist a stronger will. It seemed indeed to her that her husband had trusted to a broken reed in trusting to his young kinsman’s honour. He might mean well enough, but how could he cope with the guardian who was double his age, and who had three times his force of character?

She had yet to learn that character is not ready-made, but is created bit by bit, and day by day.

The horsemen drew nearer, crossed the drawbridge, rode up to the door, and dismounted. There was a buzz of conversation without, but within there reigned an unbroken silence. All eyes were turned now upon Hugo. He still leaned back in the chair. Would he never move? Would he never speak? Was this their protector? This the man upon whom depended their whole future!

A thundering knock at the hall-door brought Dennis the man to open it.

‘Is Colonel Wharncliffe within?’ asked Sir Peregrine Blake.

‘He is away from home, sir,’ replied the man composedly.

The magistrate swore a deep oath. But another voice interrupted him impatiently.

'Away from home! I don't believe a word of it. Here, sirrah! let me enter. The traitor is in hiding somewhere. Let us by, you villain! I tell you we have a warrant for his arrest. Where is the young German lad?'

Dennis knew that to resist the entrance of the magistrate and the attendants was useless; he stood aside, and they made their way into the hall.

'Where is Karl, the lutist?' reiterated Randolph, impatiently.

No one replied, but Hugo slowly raised himself, and walked forward a few paces.

'There is no one of that name present,' he said, quietly. 'I have dropped all disguise, Randolph; our kinsfolk know my name.'

Randolph, taking no notice of any one else, rushed straight up to his brother, seized him by the collar, and shook him much as a cat shakes a mouse preparatory to killing it.

'What do you mean?' he said, through his teeth.

Hugo made no reply.

'What do you mean?' repeated Randolph. 'Have you warned that traitor?'

'I confessed to Colonel Wharncliffe that I had played the spy in his house,' said Hugo, in a low voice.

'You warned him, knowing that to do so would ruin my plans?'

'I warned him knowing that it was right to do so.'

'Then take that for your reward!'

And he dealt him a blow which made him measure his length on the flagstones.

There was a sort of subdued exclamation in the group of spectators. The daughters of the house—a little group of grey gowns and broad white collars, contrasting strangely with the bright colours worn by the invading body—shrank nearer to their mother, who stood before them like a hen sheltering her chickens. She was very pale, and there was no mistaking the anxiety in her face, but to insult her calm dignity would have been impossible. Randolph took off his hat as he turned to her, and bowed slightly.

'Madam,' he said, 'this gentleman,' he indicated an officer who stood beside Sir Peregrine, 'bears a warrant for Colonel Wharncliffe's arrest. He is charged with complicity in the plot to kill his Majesty and the Duke of York.'

'Whosoever charges him with such a crime, charges him falsely,' she said, with a calm smile.

‘Madam,’ continued Randolph, ‘your husband is charged upon certain evidence; I myself deposed to his disaffection towards the Government, his own papers proved the like, and my brother will confirm all and render the evidence irrefutable.’

‘Never!’ exclaimed Hugo, emphatically.

He was on his feet again. His eyes flashed, as even dreamy grey eyes can flash upon occasion. He looked full at Randolph as though daring him to do his worst.

Randolph returned his gaze with one of prolonged inquiring scrutiny. This sudden development of resolution, of courage, of opposition surprised him not a little. It upset all his calculations.

‘More of that anon,’ he remarked, after a pause. Then, turning to Mrs. Wharncliffe, ‘I must trouble you, madam, to tell us where your husband is.’

‘My husband is absent,’ she answered, quietly. ‘And I can give you no information as to his movements.’

Randolph stepped across to the officer, and they consulted together for a minute or two. Then the officer crossed the hall.

‘It will be our duty, madam, to search the premises,’ he said, ‘and in the meantime the household will remain here in view of two of my men.’

She bowed assent, and with great dignity moved to one of the carved arm-chairs beside the hearth. The girls followed her, and stood around her chair. Hugo went back to his old quarters on the other side of the hearth, while at the further end of the hall Sir Peregrine Blake and Randolph sat talking together over the tankards of ale for which they had not scrupled to ask. The two constables paced up and down keeping guard, and wishing themselves with their fellows, who were enjoying a far more exciting game of hide-and-seek.

Endless seemed the waiting-time to all concerned, but more especially to those who waited beside the hearth. The secret hiding-place was indeed hard to find, but if by evil chance they were to come across it!

The suspense was a slow agony. It required all Mrs. Wharncliffe’s well-bred self-control to prevent her from starting as the steps of the searchers were heard overhead, here, there, and everywhere, about the rambling old house. She heard every sound, every exclamation, every door which was opened or shut. The whole power of her being seemed to have concentrated itself into the sense of hearing. But for all that

she betrayed no emotion, only sat very still and held little Evelyn's hand fast.

At length came the longed-for relief! The party returned, confessing that they had made a thorough search both of the house and the premises, and that no trace of the colonel was to be found. Little Evelyn could not restrain a relieved smile; the others, taking their cue from their mother, maintained a stately indifference of expression.

But once again poor Mrs. Wharncliffe trembled as she glanced across to the other side of the hearth. That poor youth who looked already so weary, so worn out,—in his strength, in his steadfastness lay their hope for the future! True, he had made just now a gallant resistance. But the effort seemed to have exhausted his strength. He had collapsed entirely. The fire had gone out of his eyes, the manliness had gone from his bearing; he watched fixedly the brother who had hitherto exercised such a strange influence over him. Oh, would the old fascination prove too strong for him? would his resolution fail?

She was recalled from her own thoughts by a stormy altercation at the other end of the hall.

'Not found him?' exclaimed Randolph. 'Idiots! I tell you he shall be found! I'll get the truth out of that boy; bring him forward!'

The two constables moved towards Hugo, but he waved them back, and himself walked steadily towards his brother, who, following Sir Peregrine, had approached the table in the middle of the hall.

'Now, lad,' said Sir Peregrine, not unkindly, 'I've long ago forgiven you the wound you gave me, and it is as a friend that I counsel you to obey your brother, and reveal all that you know about this confounded colonel. What is his fate to you? Your duty to your brother, your duty to your sovereign, alike demand that you shall disclose this matter.'

'Sir,' said Hugo, respectfully, 'you demand what is impossible.'

'Impossible! What nonsense is this? Impossible! How impossible?'

'Impossible, sir, because it is against my conscience.'

Sir Peregrine laughed aloud.

'By the powers, if that isn't the same thing he said before our duel! Conscience—I know nothing of conscience! All I know is that you owe duty to your king and to your brother, and that you owe naught to this traitor.'

‘Pardon me, sir,’ said Hugo, ‘there is one thing we owe to all men, whether they be friends or foes,—we owe them justice.’

‘We waste time bandying words,’ said Sir Peregrine, impatiently. ‘It would be much more to the purpose, lad, if you told us when you last saw Colonel Wharncliffe.’

‘More to your purpose, sir,’ said Hugo, quietly, ‘but not to mine.’

‘Leave him to me, Blake,’ said Randolph, interposing. ‘Why attempt to argue with him? I’ll find more convincing arguments than words.’

He laid a firm hand on Hugo’s shoulder, and, fixing his eyes on him, said, in a low, yet strangely forceful voice—

‘Just now, Hugo, you said that you would never give evidence against Colonel Wharncliffe. Do you know that such a refusal will render you guilty of misprision of treason?’

‘I know that I should be charged with misprision,’ he replied.

‘You will be charged, and most assuredly found guilty. And the penalty of misprision of treason is imprisonment for life.’

Hugo made a sign of assent, but did not speak.

‘Am I to understand that you will be such a fool as to incur this in order to shelter the foe of your own family?’

‘I will suffer it in order to make amends for an act of injustice,’ said Hugo, firmly.

‘I am loth to take you at your word,’ said Randolph, his face clouding. ‘Once more I will give you a chance. Do you refuse to obey me in this matter?’

‘Ay, sir, I respectfully refuse.’

‘You will not give evidence against this man?’

A shudder ran through the watchers by the hearth. The elder brother had spoken this last appeal more in sorrow than in anger; there was deep regret, deep appeal in his tone. For an instant it seemed that Hugo wavered. Was there no compromise that he could make? Must he definitely and for ever sever himself from Randolph? Must he sacrifice his whole life? The struggle was but momentary, however. His eye kindled, a great calmness overspread his face.

‘I will *never* witness against him, so help me God!’

The words seemed to vibrate through the little assembly. They had not been spoken loudly, yet they fell upon the ears of all present with a curious power.

Their effect upon Randolph was extraordinary. In an

instant they changed him from the elder brother, regretfully showing the effect of this course of action, to the stern, almost cruel avenger.

‘Well, Sir Peregrine,’ he said, with a laugh, ‘bring out your ink-horn and make out a warrant for the committal of this young rebel.’

Sir Peregrine obeyed, muttering oaths and ejaculations, which were not complimentary to the rebel in question.

Hugo scarcely heeded them, however. In a dazed way he watched the magistrate writing slowly and laboriously the order which was to deprive him of his freedom. It is not in the first moments that we realise all the meaning of future evil, even when we have voluntarily embraced that evil. There is a time of numbness, a time of semi-paralysis, which almost invariably interposes itself between the falling of the blow and the sharpest of the suffering.

There was no lack of evidence that Hugo had in fact concealed Colonel Wharncliffe’s supposed treason. He had made away with the book of manuscripts, had warned him of the danger in which he stood. To obtain the signatures for his committal was but the work of a few minutes.

But Randolph had not yet done with him. Irritated almost beyond endurance by the calmness of his bearing, he once more laid forcible hands on him.

‘There is more to be had out of this fellow yet, Blake. He has ruined his own chances, but I’ll yet have some sort of clue to the colonel’s hiding-place from him. Here, sirrah, bring me my riding-whip.’

Mrs. Wharncliffe stepped forward with an eager appeal.

‘Sir, I implore you, do him no violence.’

But there she checked herself, for Hugo gave her a warning look; she knew that he meant his tormentors to deem by his silence that with him only lay the secret of the colonel’s movements. Had the safety of any but her husband depended on her silence, however, she could not have let her guest suffer. But she thought of her husband, and went back to the hearth. Evelyn and Damaris were crying, Betty trying to comfort them; Frances looked pale and anxious, Robina excited, while Joyce stood, her hands locked tightly together, her eyes dilated, and a burning spot of colour in her cheeks.

‘Joyce, my love, Joyce,’ said her mother, softly.

The girl turned, caught at the hand stretched out to her, and crouched down beside her mother with her face hidden. She did not cry, but she trembled from head to foot. And yet

all the time she was making a desperate effort to still herself, for although to listen was torture, she yet longed to hear whether Hugo spoke or not.

‘When did you confess this to the colonel, and when did you last see him?’ asked the elder brother. ‘Mark me well, I will flog you till you answer me.’

‘Then you may flog till doomsday,’ was Hugo’s reply.

And after that he never spoke; not a sound was heard in the hall save the sound of the heavy leathern thong as it descended, and the unanswered questions, reiterated from time to time.

To Joyce it seemed like an eternity. At length the dreadful monotony was broken by an ejaculation from Sir Peregrine Blake. Floggings were very common in those days—masters constantly flogged their servants, and parents their sons. But they did it in moderation, and had some regard to the consequences. In his wrath Randolph seemed forgetful of these. He could only take in the one maddening thought, that his brother, who had been his obedient tool, was now withholding the one thing which he longed to know.

‘Odds fish, man! you’ll kill the lad,’ exclaimed the magistrate. ‘Be warned by me, and stop, for it would be an awkward thing for a magistrate to have countenanced you.’

Then, as Randolph took no heed, the magistrate beckoned to the chief constable.

‘Take the prisoner in charge, Mr. Constable,’ he said. ‘He is your property now, and we must put a stop to this game.’

The man, who had very reluctantly witnessed the scene, promptly stepped forward, and intimated to Randolph that the prisoner must be removed. Randolph in a violent passion poured forth a torrent of oaths, but they fell off the constable like water off a duck’s back—he quietly motioned to his men to assist him, and together they bore off Hugo’s inanimate form to the north parlour.

One of Sir Peregrine Blake’s servants hurried forward as they made their way from the hall.

‘The young gentleman’s clothes, sir, which we brought from Longbridge? Shall I bear them to him?’

‘Ay, ay,’ said Sir Peregrine, ‘he’d best go to jail in his own character, not as a strolling musician. Ay, Launce, bear them after him, and bid him make haste and don them.’

CHAPTER XVII.

‘IT IS YOUR LOVE I WANT.’

Love, led by faith and fed by hope, is able
To travel through the world's wide wilderness ;
And burdens seeming most intolerable
Both to take up and bear with cheerfulness.
To do or suffer, what appears in sight
Extremely heavy, love will make most light.

Yea, what by men is done or sufferèd,
Either for God, or else for one another,
Though in itself it be much blemishèd
With many imperfections which smother,
And drown the worth and weight of it ; yet, fall
What will or can, love makes amends for all.

CHRISTOPHER HARVEY.

ALL this time Colonel Wharncliffe lay securely hidden in the secret room which had served them so well. High up in the wall, just within the cupboard-like entrance to the staircase which led to the gallery, there was a tiny sliding-door, large enough to permit a man to creep through it on hands and knees. No one unacquainted with the secret would be in the least likely to discover it, and it could only be reached by means of a ladder. Crawling through the narrow aperture, you emerged into a good-sized room, not more than five feet high, however, and depending for light and air on some tiny crevices in the outer wall. It was between the ceiling of the south parlour and the floor of the room above, and it would have been quite possible to live in the house for years and never know of the existence of this curiously planned retreat.

Well supplied with rugs, food, and books, which might be read while sitting close to the largest air-hole, Colonel Wharncliffe might have passed a very tolerable day, had it not been for his great anxiety. Voices and footsteps he could indeed distinguish in his hiding-place, but the confused Babel only made him more wretched. He longed to come forth and see how matters were going, longed to learn the fate of poor Hugo. He heard the sound of the search-party ransacking every corner of the house, heard steps going up and down the little staircase, and men questioning each other as to the possibility of sliding panels within a few yards of his

invisible door. But no one had found him; and after that came a long, quiet interval, when, although he strained every nerve to listen, he could make out nothing, save that some sort of conclave must be proceeding in the hall. After a time, there were sounds as of hurried dispersion; the servants returned to the kitchen, and old Nurse came up the gallery stairs with little Evelyn, who was crying.

'Don't fret, child,' he heard her say. 'He is a brave lad, and you should be proud of him.'

Then they passed on to the nursery, and once more there was silence. What could have happened? Hugo had kept his promise, that was evident,—but what had they done to him?

Again a step on the staircase, and again the closing of the door behind some one who crept up very slowly, and went softly into the gallery. He heard a long, sobbing sigh, but could not tell who it came from, though he fancied that the step was like Joyce's.

Sir Peregrine, meanwhile, having done his best to talk Randolph into a better temper, and having signally failed, thought that a good dinner was the least that the household could afford him for all the trouble he had taken on this hot summer day. And accordingly every one was hastening to the kitchen and the buttery, and doing the best that could be done to furnish an unexpected meal for a dozen hungry men. In the confusion, Joyce stole away by herself to the gallery, and crouched down in a shady corner, where she could watch the door of the north parlour without being herself seen. After a time, the constable and the two men who had gone in with Hugo returned to the hall. One of them bore the musician's clothes which Hugo had worn as a disguise. The chief constable locked the door behind him, and pocketed the key, then stepped up to Sir Peregrine.

'The young gentleman has revived, sir, and has donned his own riding suit, but I doubt whether he be fit to travel to Bishop-Stortford to-night.'

'Fit! nonsense. Confound your scruples, I tell you he shall be fit!' interposed Randolph. 'I'll soon make him fit.'

He rose as though meditating an immediate visit to the prisoner, but the constable made no sign of yielding the key, and Sir Peregrine interposed.

'Dinner first, my boy, dinner first, to sweeten your tongue and your temper. Ah! here comes a cline of beef in the very nick of time. Come, let us fall to, and leave yon poor

fellow to digest the leathering you gave him. Come on, come on, I'll do the carving, since your arm maybe is a bit weary.'

In the gallery, Joyce clenched her hands fiercely as the laughter evoked by this remark rose to her. Then a sudden thought occurred to her. She stole softly down-stairs once more, ran to the kitchen, and snatched up a freshly-baked manchet, then to the buttery, where she filled a cup with sack, and, creeping out unperceived by the back door, she stole along at the back of the house till she came to the window of the withdrawing-room, which opened down to the ground. All was very quiet there.

There were two doors to the withdrawing-room. One opened at the foot of the great oak staircase, and near to the hall; the other door, facing the window, led to the north parlour. It was just possible that the constable might not have noticed this, and might have left it unlocked. It was a double door. She opened the one on the withdrawing-room side, set down her burden, and listened for a moment breathlessly. Hugo was certainly alone. She softly turned the handle of the second door, and found that it yielded. She opened it a very little way, and called him, scarcely above her breath.

'Cousin Hugo! are you here?'

He staggered forward, hardly able to believe his own ears. Yet surely it was Joyce who had spoken to him!

He flung back the door impatiently. Yes, there she stood, with the cup of wine and the manchet of bread in her hands, and her sweet eyes lifted to his.

'You?—you here?' he exclaimed.

'Hush!' she said, warningly. 'Not one word till you have taken these. They say you are to be carried as far as Bishop-Stortford this night, and you so weary already.'

He let her draw up a chair for him, and passively took the bread and wine, which, indeed, he stood in great need of. Joyce stole noiselessly to the locked door leading from the north parlour to the hall. Looking through the keyhole, she could see the long table laden with good cheer, and the twelve strangers sitting round it, while her mother sat in the chair by the hearth, with Robina and the three elder girls standing beside her.

'They have but just begun their dinner. I shall have time to fetch you more,' she said, returning to Hugo.

'No,' he said; 'I could not eat another morsel. Yet, if indeed there is time, stay with me, sweet cousin; let me

at least bid you farewell. We are not likely to see each other again.'

'Do not say that,' she faltered, trying to keep back her tears.

He looked at her for a minute fixedly—looked at her as one who looks at a picture which he would fain carry in his mind to his dying day. The blue eyes with just that mingling of love and pain in them, the sweet mouth a little tremulous, the colour coming and going in the rounded cheeks, the sunny brown curls somewhat disordered.

He glanced round the room and shuddered involuntarily, remembering his midnight search. The old ancestor in the corner still pointed downwards with his long taper hand, the eyes of the other pictures still seemed to follow him reproachfully. 'You played the spy,' they seemed to say. 'You in your kinsman's house stole like a thief at dead of night. For shame! for shame!'

'Joyce!' he said, as if appealing against the verdict of the pictures. 'Joyce, say once more that you forgive me,—say once more you do not hate me!'

'In truth,' she sobbed, 'you have more than repaid all the injury, you have wiped it out for ever.'

'Say, then, that you do not hate me.'

'Hate you!' she sobbed. 'How could I?'

'Ah, more than that!' he cried, in a low, passionate voice. 'Joyce, Joyce—it is your love I want,—your love! Yet I have ruined your home,—I dare not ask it,—I cannot. But, Joyce, I love you—love you—love you! Wild horses shall tear me ere I breathe one word to hurt your father.'

She did not speak, but just stooped and kissed him.

'God bless you for that!' he cried. 'You pardon me by that kiss, you say you trust me!'

'Ay,' she whispered, softly. 'Ay, and love you.'

'Say it again!' he exclaimed, drawing her towards him. 'Say it once more, and I will be strong to meet death and torture!'

She flushed rosy red, but repeated the words just above her breath.

'I love you, my brave knight,—I love you!'

'Ah, not brave,' he sighed; 'but going to be, in the strength of your love, my heart! my queen! my helper!'

Poor children! their bliss was but short-lived. All too soon Hugo's love warned him of the danger which Joyce incurred by lingering.

'No more of this,' he said, gently. 'My dear one, you must not stay. I risk your name—your safety; Randolph stands at nothing. One last kiss—then to prison with a strong heart. My own, my life, God bless you!'

'Make me one promise ere we part,' she said. 'Promise that you will ever trust my father. Promise that you will come to him when you are free.'

'Ay,' he said, smiling, but very sadly, 'I promise, when I am free.'

Hand-in-hand they crossed the room to the double door, then, once more he clasped her in his arms, kissing her again and again. No words now, for they were both of them past speaking. Their parting was a silent one. Very gently he put her from him, watched her cross the room and pass out through the window, then turned back to his prison, closing behind him the doors which had proved for him the very portals of hope.

Before long the key of the other door was unlocked, and the chief constable entered.

'You must follow me, sir,' he said. 'The horses are in readiness. I am sorry I can't get permission to fetch you any victuals, but your guardian will not permit it.'

'Thank you, I have need of nothing,' said Hugo, composedly.

The constable looked at him in amaze. Was this the same man whom he had borne into the parlour but an hour before? And in fact the whole household—the whole household at least with one exception—shared in the amaze. Had Hugo doffed his old nature with his musician's garb, and donned a new character with the crimson doublet? They had looked to see him pale, cowed, scarcely able to walk—and behold here he was bearing himself with a dignity which was altogether foreign to him, moving slowly indeed, and not without difficulty, but bearing his head high, as though he were the possessor of some new and unknown strength. His dreamy grey eyes shone with a light that was strangely incomprehensible to all the spectators. His old expression of easy indifference had given place to an air that seemed almost triumphant. His pale face was slightly flushed. What was the meaning of it all? Was it thus that such as Hugo went to what would almost inevitably prove a lifelong imprisonment? Was it thus that he bade farewell to a life which might have been full of all things which men most prize? Was it thus that he turned his back on court favour, on pleasure, on freedom itself?

Randolph watched him curiously as he walked down the hall to the table in the centre, where one of the constables was waiting for him with a pair of handcuffs. With a touch of his old philosophic calm he held out his hands passively, and allowed the irons to be placed on his wrists without a word. It was Mrs. Wharncliffe who interceded for him.

'Sir,' she said, turning to Sir Peregrine, 'surely you may spare him this indignity. Surely you may trust him.'

'Far from it!' broke in Randolph, with a bitter laugh. 'I would trust him with naught. These handcuffs were meant for your husband, madam, and my brother has donned them of his own accord. I am not to blame.'

Hugo glanced wistfully across to the little group by the hearth. Joyce had half hidden herself behind Betty and Damaris, but for one instant their eyes met.

Just that one mute farewell—he dared not risk a second, lest Randolph should mark it. He turned to Mrs. Wharncliffe and kissed her hand.

'Madam,' he said, quickly, 'I thank you for your hospitality and your kindness, and I pray your forgiveness—for all.'

He could not speak of what was most at his heart, but he repeated again in an undertone, and very fervently, 'Your forgiveness for all—when you know all.'

To find words in which to answer him was almost as difficult for her. How could she thank him with all those hostile ears listening? To do so would but increase his difficulties. All she could do was by look and touch to convey to him her deep gratitude.

'Farewell,' she said, her voice quivering a little. 'Farewell, cousin, and God bless you.'

He glanced swiftly round the hall, up to the gallery where he had lived through so much, and wherefrom the background the calm-faced nun looked down upon him; round to the picture of the man struggling in the waves, his constant heart dreading no danger; then up to his own picture as a little innocent child, free from all penalty of error, his hands toying with a spaniel, and little deeming that one day they should wear shameful fetters.

In the meantime Sir Peregrine and Randolph had bade farewell to Mrs. Wharncliffe, and the chief constable had drawn up his men around the prisoner in impressive order. Another moment and he gave the order to march out to the great door, where the horses were awaiting them. Hugo found his own chestnut there; it had been brought by one of the

grooms from Longbridge Hall, where it had been quartered for some weeks. The sight gave him pleasure; it was something to have his favourite, even for what would in all probability prove his last ride.

Scarcely was he mounted when the nurse came out hastily, bearing his lute-case.

— 'You have left this, sir,' she said.

Amid some laughter one of the constables fastened it to the saddle, making some rough joke about the musician taking his music with him to jail. But Hugo was proof against jokes, for the nurse had whispered to him that he should search inside, and he had some hope that Joyce might have left him a message in it.

And now indeed the last moment had come, the household was gathered together at the door to watch their departure. Many of the eyes that watched him were dim with tears; in all he could read gratitude, in some he could read love.

Joyce clung to her mother, but never took her eyes off Hugo. That upright figure on the chestnut horse, the figure in crimson doublet and Spanish sombrero, with the strange new dignity of expression and the eyes bright with noble self-sacrificing love—with love for her.

And it was naught to her that Sir Peregrine quarrelled with his servants, and that Randolph swore at every one who approached him. She heeded only one thing in all the confusion. Just at the last she heard her lover's voice pleading rather anxiously with one of the constables.

'I can manage him, spite of the irons,' he said; 'he will go better for me than for you with free hands.'

'I cannot help it, sir, I must have the reins,' said the man. And the prisoner, with a gesture of impatience, made them over to him.

'Are you ready?' said Sir Peregrine.

'Aye, sir,' replied the chief constable. 'We will follow your honour.'

Hugo bowed a farewell to the group at the door, glanced once again at Joyce, smiled faintly, and was borne away.

The members of the household did not leave the door till the horsemen were out of sight; then they quietly dispersed, for indeed none of them felt as though they could speak. A great danger had been averted from their home; the master was, for the present, at any rate, safe. But to save him a young life had been sacrificed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOYCE'S JOURNAL.

Lift up to Him thy heavie clouded eyne,
That thou His soveraine bountie mayst behold,
And read, through love, His mercies manifold.—SPENSER.

I SCARCE know whether to write more of this journal or to tie these few sheets together and leave them as they are. So much has happened that will not bear putting into words, and so much that may not with safety be preserved in writing. For since that last entry all things are changed. Karl is no more the wandering minstrel, but our own kinsman, Hugo Wharncliffe, but how, and when, and why he revealed it to us I dare not here set down, lest perchance these papers fall into unfriendly hands. This much, however, all the world knows, and therefore I can do no wrong by putting it in my journal.

While we were living on here so quietly, one Keeling, a salter in London, brought word to Sir Leolyn Jenkyns, principal Secretary of State, that there was a conspiracy abroad to kill the king. Sir Leolyn, not willing to hearken to what was but sworn to by one man, dismissed him until he could bring a second witness to confirm his words; whereupon he compelled his younger brother, much against his will, to get admitted to some society where they say the talk was treasonable, and then on the fourteenth day of this month of June, in the year of our Lord, 1683, both the Keeling brothers gave evidence on oath in confirmation of the plot, and the news spread through the country like wild-fire. They say the conspirators have been meeting in many places in London, but most chiefly at the house of one Colonel Rumsey in Soho Square, and in Mr. West's chambers in the Temple. Also at the sign of the 'Mitre' in Aldgate, the 'Horse Shoe,' Tower Hill, the 'King's Head,' Atheist Alley, the 'Salutation' and the 'George,' Lombard Street, and the 'Green Dragon,' Snow Hill. But, though folks seem to know the name of all the meeting-places, every one has a different story about the plot itself. Some say that the king and the duke were to have been murdered on their way from Newmarket—that was the first story we heard—and that they had escaped only by the

fire at Newmarket causing the king to go back to London sooner than his wont. But this should have been in the spring. Others talk of a great insurrection that was to have been on Queen Elizabeth's day, in November next. But the strange part is that they can name no great leaders who were to head this great insurrection.

The story that seems now to be credited by most is that which is given by two of the conspirators, who, thinking to save themselves by confession, have not fled the country like all other suspected people, but have delivered themselves up of free will. My father thinks the tale reads strangely, that it is most probably in some measure a sham plot concocted by these two, with some admixture of truth, but with many false details.

This is the outline of the story told by Mr. West and Colonel Rumsey. They say that Mr. Rumbold, the maltster, who owns the Rye-House Farm in Hertfordshire, had offered them the use of his house, which is strong and well placed. Here forty men were to be gathered; the narrow road was to be blocked by the upsetting of a cart, and, the king's coach being thus brought to a standstill, the armed men were to attack and murder him and the Duke of York, while a second division of men attacked the guards, and then retiring were to defend the house and moat till night enabled them to escape. It is passing strange, though, that they could but name eight of all the forty men who were to assemble at the Rye-House, and they seem to know naught of any supply of arms or horses; nor could they name one single Whig leader who had aught to do with this scheme. However, they do declare that they have heard of conferences held by the Duke of Monmouth and other lords with some from Scotland, who planned a general rising, and spoke of seizing the king's guards. How far all this story is true no one can ever know.

Perchance there may have been some who deemed that even so treacherous a murder is justified by the present state of affairs, though one would fain believe it all a lie. But, true or false, it matters not—it is currently believed, and every Whig is in danger, every one who has shown disapproval of the king's government, every one who sided in former times with the Commonwealth party, risks being apprehended. As to the leading Whigs, we have not yet heard their fate, but my father told us that he doubted not the king would be but too thankful for any excuse to lay hands on them,—and that without fail they would be included among the Rye-House

conspirators. In especial he mentioned Colonel Sydney, who, he says, is a great friend to Hugo, the bravest and best of men, but, unfortunately for him, a well-known Republican.

How hard and wearisome it has been to write all these public tidings, these hateful versions of plots and risings, and murders and treacheries, when all the while these said plots and revelations have made such chaos of our home-life!

For, indeed, since that terrible 18th of June, all has been chaos. I hardly dare to think of it yet, much less to write of all that slow agony. And yet it was that same 18th of June which brought me the best thing in all the world,—a good man's love. For it was then—after they had used him so cruelly—then, when he was going to prison for the sake of shielding my father, that Hugo told me he loved me. It seems passing strange that all this while dreaming of Juliet, and Imogen, and many another, I had yet never got any idea of love at all. It was Hugo who opened that new world for me, it was Hugo who gave me my first glimpse at that wonderful, wonderful joy,—and no other man on earth could ever have done it; for only he, my brave knight, had the key to fit my lock.

Surely it was God who made us for each other. Were it not for that thought, I could hardly think he ought to love me. There are so many more good, more clever, more beautiful, and more in his own world. So many too who seem to need such a great gift more than I do, with my father and mother, and this dear Mondisfield. But God has given us to each other, and there is naught for me to do, so far as I can see, but to thank Him for His great gift, and to strive to grow more worthy of my own true love.

We all stood at the door to watch them go. Hugo walked out of the hall with far more ease than we looked for, considering his long illness. As to the fetters, he seemed not to heed the shame of them, but bore his head high, as he passed out surrounded by the constables. In his face pain was blent with a strange look of triumph, and when he was mounted on his beautiful chestnut, he looked, oh, so far the noblest of all the troop! Spite of those cruel handcuffs, which would scarce permit him to stroke the neck of his favourite steed, he seemed like the Prince of the company, the others showing beside him like ruffians. Then, after much quarrelling and swearing from Sir Peregrine and that other, whom I cannot yet name, or scarce trust myself to think on, the word was given for the start.

Hugo's eyes looked into mine for the last time, —and they seemed to say, 'Courage even for this! Love to all eternity!' Then the constable led off his horse, and the rest of the men fell in behind, two and two, and thus the cavalcade passed down the drive, across the bridge, and so through the park until the bend in the road hid them from us. And I hated the trees that came betwixt us, and I hated the space which divided us, and I hated, with a blind, burning, raging hatred, the cause of all this misery, who must here be nameless.

What became of the others I do not know, but by and by I found that I was left alone with my mother, who all the time had held my hand in hers. She looked in my face, but I dared not meet her look, because of that rage which blazed within my heart, and must show in my eyes. But mothers know without seeing, and it was of no use. She put her arm round me, and, still keeping my right hand fast in hers, led me up to her bed-chamber. Then she signed to me to lie down and rest on her bed, which was just what I longed to do, only that with the rest there came too the thought that all was over,—quite over, and with that a great fit of weeping which I could not check. And then all my evil thoughts, my hatred to that other, rushed into words, and I raved and stormed more like a foolish child than a woman—the woman whom Hugo loves. Every moment I thought my mother would rebuke me, but for some time she did not speak. At last, laying her hand on my forehead, she said, very quietly—

'Joyce, you are speaking of one whom Hugo loves; and not only that, but of one whom the Lord Himself loves.'

'How can He love such a brute—such a brute?' I cried, almost angry to think it could be.

But my mother said nothing, and in the silence a sort of shame came over me to think of the words I had said. Presently my mother spoke again; she began as though describing a picture, I knew well enough whose picture.

'A young man,' she said, in her soft, low voice—'a young man just of age, brought up in what for his station in life was poverty, and even privation. This had been incurred by his father's devotion to the late king, whom he had served faithfully, and in whose cause he had suffered much. But the young man cared not much for the cause, neither could he care much for the king whom he had never known. He grudged the lost money and resented the present sufferings. At first he hoped that the king's son would reward the family for their past devotion; but it was not so, and the young man

grew bitter and hard, and the constant hankering after money and the constant brooding over the injustice ate into his very soul. And then, while he was yet young, the plague came and swept away in one week all that made his home, and, alone, he was thrown upon a world full of the worst temptations. This man had a kinsman whom he hated—a kinsman who was richer than he, and whose property had not been lost, for he had been on the winning side. This made the young man more bitter still, and seemed to him a fresh injustice. He longed to wrest the property from his kinsman. All this time he had been surrounded by the very worst people, and in all his life there had been but one being to love him; that was a little child, whom he too loved in his rough way. But the bad craving after the money and the kinsman's property grew faster than his love for the younger brother, till at last it overshadowed it, and, with the hope of at last gaining the property, he did his brother a cruel wrong.'

My mother paused. She could not go on with the story, for who knows how it is to end? But somehow her tale had softened that dreadful, raging anger in my heart; I began to feel very sorry for that other—that other whom Hugo loves.

Then my mother knelt by the bed and prayed. I cannot remember what she said, but I know it brought to my mind the prayer of Jairus—'My little daughter lieth at the point of death; I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her that she may be healed, and she shall live.'

And I saw, as I had never seen before, that hatred was death, and that life was love; and I hoped that Jesus would lay His hands on me and heal me.

And then all things grew very still, and my mother's voice seemed to go further and further away into a dreamy distance, and I fell asleep.

It was evening when I woke. Through the open window I could hear the cawing of the rooks as they flew home to their nests in the elm-trees, and sitting up in bed, still somewhat stiff and weary, I could see a long, wavering line of black against the evening sky. How they fluttered those huge wings and how contentedly they cawed! I had always liked the rooks, but never so well as to-night. And, remembering how God cared even for birds, I could bear to remember too how Hugo was still on his weary journey, worn out and exhausted perhaps, but still 'cared for.'

With a great longing to be out of doors, I put back the curtains which my mother had drawn, and, stealing down—

stairs, went out through the withdrawing-room window, and so through the pleasance to the apple-walk. It was like coming out of doors after an illness—in part because my knees felt odd and shaky, but chiefly because all the world seemed so beautiful, and so new, and so full of things one had never greatly thought of before. Most of the birds were abed and asleep, but the rooks still cawed, and a thrush sang its evening lay among the trees at the further side of the moat. I sat down on the grassy, sloping bank, and listened to it; and it seemed as though the grass were softer and greener, and the water clearer, and the sunset sky ruddier than ever before. All the world seemed that night to speak of God, to cry out, 'He is here! He is here!' and I knew that His Spirit was in my heart too,—and in Hugo's.

Sitting there beside the moat, my mother found me, and she too sat down and listened.

Then, when the thrush had ceased, I told her of Hugo's love to me, and mine to him,—all of which she knew right well before. Yet, for all that, she would fain have had me tell her with my own lips,—and it was better so, though at first it was hard. Not that my mother said one word of rebuke. But it was somehow hard to put our story into words, and I knew she was sorry that all had gone as it had. She would fain have had me yet a child. And, thinking it over, I see that it was natural. For she knew well what I only begin to know,—that love means pain,—and she would fain have kept me for years to come content with the home-life.

One word she let fall, too, about this past month.

'I have thought of you as a child, little daughter,' she said. 'And now I blame myself for it. I blame neither you nor Hugo, but I blame myself.'

She thought, I know, of the long afternoons in the gallery, when Evelyn and I had amused him. But, then, how could she know that he was aught but Karl the minstrel, or that we should love each other?

And we agreed that it were best not to speak of this even to my sisters, as yet. 'Only,' said my mother, with such a beautiful smile on her face, 'when you want to talk, come to me, little Joyce.'

And then, blushing slightly, she told me a little—a very little—about the time when she and my father had first loved each other, she being just my age. And they were not formally plighted to each other for some years, because our grandparents thought them both too young. And she told me how anxious

she was before the battle of Worcester, and of how my father was wounded there, and she heard naught of him for weeks. Then, by and by, we walked back to the house together. I think I never knew before quite what my mother was. Is it that Hugo's love has opened my eyes to all other love too?

CHAPTER XIX.

A CONTEST OF WILLS.

He that endures for what his conscience knows
 Not to be ill, doth from a patience high
 Look only on the cause whereto he owes
 Those sufferings,—not on his miseries.
 The more he endures, the more his glory grows,
 Which never grows from imbecility.
 Only the best composed and worthiest hearts
 God sets to act the hardest constantest parts.—S. SAMUEL.

THE cavalcade did not pass through the village of Mondisfield. Hugo watched anxiously to see whether they should take the turning to the village at the cross-roads. They paused for a minute, but only to bid farewell to Sir Peregrine, who branched off there with his two serving-men, returning to Longbridge Hall. He bade the prisoner think better of his resolution before nightfall, good-naturedly reminding him that he might even yet ride into London as a free man.

'Think better of it, for your brother's sake,' he repeated. 'Tis but a sorry day's work for him to ride back with you in the stead of that confounded colonel.'

'I have made my choice, sir, and must abide by it,' said Hugo, gravely.

He saw Randolph's brow darken ominously at his words, and felt a curious regret as he saw the Suffolk squire ride away. Things had indeed come to a pretty pass when Sir Peregrine Blake could be clung to as a sort of forlorn hope—a protector! The order of the little company was now changed. Randolph motioned to the second constable to drop behind, and himself rode side by side with the prisoner, talking across him to the constable who held his reins. Hugo was oppressed by his presence; it added not a little to the discomforts of that miserable ride.

And now they began to push on quickly, for to reach Bishop-Stortford before night would need hard riding. On past wayside cottages with thatched roofs and creeper-laden walls; on past haymakers busy with their rakes and pitchforks; on past the region of cultivation, and over a vast heathy plain with no tree or shrub to give the slightest shade, and the burning midsummer sun beating down upon them mercilessly.

Randolph watched his brother very narrowly. When would that strange look of triumph, that curious dignity of mien, leave him? What was its cause? Did it indeed bode the ruin of all his hopes? Did it indeed bespeak the end of his influence over the youth? No, that he could not believe. Could the work of a lifetime be undone in so short a while? It was impossible, incredible! His old tactics would succeed at length, though possibly not just yet. He should work upon the sensitive frame, and so at last regain his influence over the rebel spirit. And in the long run it would prove all for Hugo's good. Of course it was for his good. He repeated this to himself again and again, pacifying his conscience.

And so, though the sun was intolerable, and the hard riding wearisome enough to the whole company, he welcomed the discomforts, trusting that they would further his own ends. The heat, which was turning the worthy constable's skin to a brilliant copper-colour, which was bringing wreaths of foam upon the necks of the horses, this would tell upon Hugo—would wear him out as nothing else would. Already there were lines of pain round the sensitive mouth. Endurance had never proved one of his characteristics. He took things quietly, but succumbed very soon. Surely, with careful treatment, Randolph could manage to bring him to his senses before they reached London?

And presently, sure enough, his scrutiny was rewarded. He saw traces of evident exhaustion setting in. Nor indeed was it wonderful. Hugo had gone through much on the previous day, had slept but little, and had suffered unspeakable things both mentally and bodily. Pain dimmed for a while the lover's rapture which had hitherto borne him up. His head drooped, the burning flush passed from his face and left it unnaturally pale.

'Bear up, sir,' said the constable, in a kindly voice. 'We are nigh upon a village where there is a decent inn. A glass of home-brewed will make you another man.'

Randolph speedily interposed, however.

'We can take a bait there, an you will, both for men and horses,' he said, peremptorily. 'But my brother shall not be cockered up as though he were a prince. He shall feel that there is a difference betwixt free men and prisoners.'

Hugo did not speak, but the muscles of his face quivered. The pain, and the weariness, and the intolerable thirst were bad enough, but Randolph's words seemed to cut him like a knife. Worst of all, he knew that this starving scheme meant that more pressure was to be put upon him to reveal what he knew of Colonel Wharncliffe.

The constable said no more, and they rode on, leaving the heathy plain behind, and passing on between fields and orchards, until about five o'clock they reached the village spoken of, and halted at the door of the 'Green Man.'

All save the prisoner dismounted, Randolph went into the inn, and the rest followed, leaving only one man without in charge. Had Hugo meditated escape, now would have been his time. But he knew that escape was impossible, even had he been in a state to attempt it. And as it was he was too much spent to dream of aught but obtaining such brief comfort as might be from the shade of the great chestnut-tree which spread half across the village street, and from the momentary respite from hard riding.

Randolph had judged quite rightly, this enforced waiting at the inn door, within reach of the refreshment he needed so sorely, did make him realise very keenly the difference between free men and prisoners. Wearily waiting, with the knowledge that in a few minutes the miserable journey must be resumed, he closed his eyes, unmindful of the group of children who had already drawn near to stare at the unwonted spectacle of a gentleman with lace cravat and plumed beaver under the charge of mounted constables, and wearing irons on his wrists. Their comments did not in the least disturb him, only after a time he became aware that voices were whispering around him, and he caught the tantalising repetition of the words 'thirst,' and 'water.' Was it only the echo of his own thoughts? or was some fiend mocking his wants? He roused himself from the half-faint, half-drowsy state into which he had fallen. The constable was a few paces off feeding the horses, but the voices had been real, not imaginary. Close beside him stood two rosy village children, and raised high up, as high as their little chubby arms would admit, was a brown pitcher full of water. He smiled.

'Is it for me?' he asked.

'Ay, sir,' said the elder of the two, shyly, dropping a curtsey which nearly upset the pitcher. But the horse was high, and the children were small, and Hugo's fetters would not allow him to reach the water, not even though he bent low down on the horse's neck, and not even though the children stood on their tallest tiptoe. In all his wretchedness he could not help smiling a little, but the children, looking at the white, weary face, were more inclined to cry. At this supreme moment a tall, loosely-made lad slouched forward; it was the village innocent. Muttering something unintelligible, he took the pitcher from the little ones, and with a smile in his wondering eyes, which for a moment made the foolish face almost beautiful, held the water to Hugo's lips. To his parched throat it seemed that no draught had ever been so delicious, while the kindness of these strangers touched him deeply. After all, the world was not so black as he had deemed it. Men might be cruel, but an innocent and a couple of children had cared for him; one day he would tell that story to Joyce. One day, when he had kept his last promise and gone back to Mondisfield. Yet how could that ever be? How could aught but life-long imprisonment await him? An agony of realisation swept over him, but he bravely tried to turn to other thoughts. And if not here, then he would tell her that story—would tell her all—all—in that city which lay at the end of the pilgrim's journey, in which she believed so implicitly, and for which he also began to hope.

At that moment Randolph emerged from the door of the inn, and strolled leisurely towards his horse; the innocent, still regarding Hugo with all his eyes, stood in the way.

'Get out, you d——d idiot?' he exclaimed, pushing him roughly aside. 'What do you mean by coming so near?'

The innocent, with an indescribable look of resentment, slunk away, the children took to their heels and ran for shelter to the other side of the chestnut-tree, as though this fine gentleman had been the devil himself.

'How now, Hugo?' he exclaimed, as he mounted his horse. 'Tired of your new game? art willing to be a free man once more?'

'An you be willing to make me one,' said Hugo, gravely. 'My freedom lies in your keeping, not in my own.'

'Fool! you know right well that you have but to speak one word, and those gyves are off your wrists in a twinkling.'

'And that word I will never speak.'

'Ah, well! some folk love to pose as martyrs. We shall

see, we shall see! Newgate will make you tell another tale, my fine fellow.'

'Will it be Newgate?' asked Hugo, startled out of his reserve, and speaking in his ordinary tone. Somehow the name of the jail made the dim, almost dream-like future stand out with a hideous reality. Newgate! that hell upon earth! Was he to go there? He had at least hoped for the Tower, the ignominy of which seemed far less galling.

'Assuredly it will be Newgate,' said Randolph, with great composure. 'Bethink yourself what it will be for one of your birth and breeding to be herded with thieves and murderers, and all the scum of the city. Don't blame me for sending you there; 'tis your own doing.'

'You are right,' said Hugo, sadly. 'It is my own doing.'

And with that he fell into deep thought and spoke no more, leaving Randolph surprised and a little softened by his very unexpected reply. The elder brother, too, fell into a reverie, and thus they went on their way, leaving the village behind them—the innocent waving a last farewell to Hugo, and repeating again and again, in his shrill, monotonous voice, 'God 'ild you, sir! God 'ild you!'

Three more hours of hard riding brought them near to their destination; Hugo, heavy-hearted and faint with pain and weariness, felt a gleam of comfort as he caught sight of the gables and chimneys of Bishop-Stortford, and the spire of St. Michael's church. The curfew-bell was ringing as they drew near to the town, ringing in the close of this longest day in his whole life. In the sky was a glory of gold and crimson and floating purple cloudlets; the whole place was suffused with the ruddy glow of the sunset, and the lights which shone here and there in the windows seemed primrose pale by contrast. The arrival of the horsemen caused quite a commotion in the quiet little country town. The women, standing with their knitting at the doors, beckoned to others within the houses to haste and see this strange sight. A group of urchins playing at shovelboard by the wayside paused in their game to stare, and at sight of the galloping horses broke out into a noisy cheer, waving their caps and shouting with all their might.

That was the last straw. The hideous mockery of it was more than Hugo could bear, and the tears started to his eyes. Poor little urchins! little they knew what the horsemen whom they cheered so lustily had been about! But the consciousness that every eye was upon him made him recover himself instantly. Drawing himself up, he rode on, looking neither to

the right nor to the left, and only longing for the rest and shelter which must soon come.

At length they reached the inn where but a few weeks before he had slept with Randolph on their way to Longbridge Hall. How different all had been then! How gaily he and Randolph had spent that evening! How little he had thought of all the danger that lay before him!

A little crowd had gathered at the inn door to watch the strangers; he was keenly conscious of their comments as the constable helped him to dismount. Giddy, exhausted, hardly able to stand, he waited for what seemed an eternity while Randolph stood on the step talking with the landlord and the chief constable. The burning colour rose to his face as he heard the words passed from one to another in the crowd—'A traitor!' 'One of the conspirators!' 'The plot!' 'What! will 'a hang 'un at Tyburn?' 'Ay, ay, to be sure, all of 'em 'll swing for it!' 'Serve the d——d traitor right!' 'Nay, but he's a fine young spark too, 'a will look rarely on the gallows-tree!'

'Don't you heed them, sir,' said one of the constables, a burly giant who grasped him firmly by the arm, as much with the view of supporting him as of keeping him in custody. 'Don't you heed them! They're naught but buzzing flies. Their heads be set round with eyes, so that they can do naught but stare and buzz.'

Hugo smiled, rather as courteously acknowledging the man's kindness than as feeling any amusement at his words. For indeed an over-driven horse may be sorely teased by a swarm of flies, and the staring, jesting crowd taxed his powers of endurance to the utmost. At length came a welcome diversion.

'Bring the prisoner forward!' said the chief constable, and Hugo was accordingly marched in between two of the men, and half led, half dragged up-stairs.

The landlord stood at the head of the staircase ready to usher them into a bed-chamber, within which Randolph was quarrelling vehemently with the chief constable.

'Well, sir, I'll not be responsible for getting the prisoner to London to-morrow, if you will have it so,' the man was saying, angrily.

'And if you thwart my purpose,' retorted Randolph with a volley of oaths, 'I tell you you shall pay dearly for it. Do you think I don't know more about the lad than you do?'

The constable growled something inarticulate, and, as at

that moment Hugo entered, said no more. He merely examined the lock of the door, bade one of the men give the prisoner what assistance he needed, and followed the landlord to another room. Randolph lingered a minute, watching Hugo keenly, as he tried to take off his broad-brimmed hat, but owing to his fettered hands, failed in the attempt.

‘When hunger makes you change your mind you can send me word,’ he said, with a mocking smile.

Hugo made no reply.

‘Till then I will wish you good-evening. Be ready to start to-morrow at seven of the clock.’

Still Hugo kept silent.

‘Do you hear what I say?’ asked Randolph, sharply.

‘I shall be ready at seven of the clock,’ returned Hugo, with an unmoved face.

Randolph left the room, feeling curiously repulsed and surprised. That Hugo, who had been hitherto so plastic in his hands, should suddenly develop this dignity of endurance, this strength of resistance, was to him utterly unaccountable.

Truth to tell the dignity did not last long, for no sooner had his brother left him, than, with a groan of irrepressible suffering, he fell back into the nearest chair, too wretched even to heed the presence of the constable.

‘Come, sir,’ said the man, ‘keep up your heart. Them buzzing flies below know naught of the truth. I’d not heed them were I in your shoon.’

‘I care naught for them!’ said Hugo. ‘But he—he is my brother—my brother, I tell you! I care for naught else!’

‘Tis a hard case,’ said the man, genuinely sorry for the poor fellow, who had indeed won all hearts by his conduct in the morning. ‘But belike, sir, it will turn out better than you fear. I can’t bring you supper, for ’tis against my orders, but an you will I can help you off with your boots and things. A man’s but a babe in such fetters as these.’

He was a rough nurse, but a kindly one, and kept up a perpetual flow of conversation, with the view of keeping his prisoner’s thoughts off the graver questions which were likely to haunt him.

‘And as to imprisonment for life,’ he remarked, cheerfully, when he had seen Hugo to bed and was about to lock him up for the night, ‘as to imprisonment, it ain’t so bad as folk think for. Your honour is over young to have left a sweet-heart behind him, and, lor’ bless you! life in Newgate is none so strict, you’ll find many a buxom wench there.’

The incongruity of this worthy man's comfort touched Hugo's sense of the ridiculous. Just because the words were such a mockery, just because they good-naturedly and unthinkingly enough touched on so sore a subject, they affected him as nothing else on earth could have done at that moment,—he burst into a violent paroxysm of laughter. He was locked up securely ; he was looking forward to nothing but a life of privation and misery ; he was ill, and weary, and sore at heart, and yet he laughed till the old four-post bed shook, laughed till wrath at his own laughter checked him, and at length brought him once more to a state of sober exhaustion.

Down below he could hear a noisy party at their supper ; more than once he could distinguish Randolph's voice in boisterous merriment. This tended more than anything to sober him once more, and, recollecting how much yet depended on his strength of purpose and determined resistance, he resolutely turned from all thoughts, and almost by an effort of will made sleep visit his weary brain. The burly constable had as much as he could do to wake him the next morning.

'God help us !' he exclaimed. 'Tis surely but babes and sucklings that sleep so sound. Supperless to bed too ! An I mistake not, your honour is as innocent of this plot as the unborn babe.'

'I know naught of any plot,—naught !' said Hugo, emphatically. And it was some comfort to him to feel sure that the man believed him. It was the only comfort he was to have that day, which proved a very hard one. Leaving Bishop-Stortford behind them early on that summer morning, they rode on to London, in the same order as before, Hugo between the chief constable and Randolph. Not a word had passed between the brothers. But Randolph was able to gauge very accurately his chances of success. They were great. He felt far more hopeful than on the previous evening. Had it not been for this, the dreary ride would have been less tolerable to him, for the chief constable was so wroth with him for his harshness to his brother, that he could make nothing of him as far as conversation went, and it was against his policy to speak to Hugo. Indeed, the prisoner was almost past speaking. Only once did he make any remark. It was as they were riding past the Rye-House. He looked up curiously at this place, the name of which must be for ever hateful to him. High walls, a battlemented, turreted house, with two oriel windows, green trees close beside it waving in the summer wind, and beyond the river Lea winding its tranquil course

through level green meadows. An innocent-looking place enough! Had it indeed been the scene destined for so treacherous a murder? Or was this plot but a device of the enemies? Would it prove a mere *ruse*, like the Meal-Tub Plot.

‘There is the place that has got you into trouble, sir,’ said the chief constable, with a smile. ‘But belike you know it too well to need my showing.’

‘I never heard aught of it till ——’ Hugo broke off abruptly, aware that Randolph was listening, and thankful that he had checked himself in time and had not added, ‘the day before yesterday.’

But the consciousness that he had nearly been betrayed into a piece of indiscretion troubled him not a little. It was so hard to be on his guard at every turn. Far harder to-day than it had been on the preceding day. He was suffering more acutely from the effects of the merciless flogging; he was weakened by hunger and fatigue, he was parched with thirst; his heart failed him at the thought of the eighteen miles which yet lay between them and London. And yet, even though the journey was so wearisome, the end was more to be dreaded than all! Thinking of that, he would have been willing indefinitely to prolong this ride,—the last ride he was ever likely to take! Life-long imprisonment! Good heavens! why had he been endowed with an imagination? How horrible were the vivid pictures which rose before him! And the world was so beautiful! Nature so fair! The rapture of ‘leafy June’ thrilled through him with that bitter-sweet consciousness which belongs by right to last times.

They rode on through the long, straggling village of Edmonton, on over Stamford Hill, where he half hoped that they might be waylaid by the highwaymen who often resorted there. Surely then he might make one last effort at escape. But no highwaymen appeared; the party of horsemen rode on unmolested. And now they were in sight of London itself, now his last ride was almost at an end, his parting with Randolph drawing near. It felt to him like some hideous nightmare. Was he indeed the same Hugo who had ridden forth on that May morning, stifling all anxiety and laying aside all care in the mere joy of existence? Could a few weeks change one’s very nature and upset one’s whole world? Now once more he rode through the same streets with shameful fetters on his wrists, with the burden of another’s safety in his keeping, with naught before him but shame and suffering.

On through Bishopgate Street Without and Within, up Cornhill among the crowds of staring passengers ; until, rather to his surprise, he was suddenly halted at an inn not far from the 'Standard.' What it was for he was too dazed and weary to make out, but the constables helped him from his horse and led him in ; he was borne unresistingly through passages and up and down steps, and finally left in a private sitting-room with no word of explanation. Bewildered, but too miserable to try to think clearly, he heard the door locked from without, stood still for a minute in a sort of stupefaction, then staggered across the room to an oaken settle, upon which he sank prone. He was vaguely conscious that through the open window sounds of horses' hoofs and of passengers floated in, and above all there rang the shrill, clear tones of a woman's voice calling, 'Strawberries, ripe strawberries !' The high, bell-like notes drew nearer and nearer, then gradually grew fainter again till they died away in the distance. Presently a much nearer sound startled him back from semi-consciousness ; the key turned in the lock, the door opened, and Randolph entered. Startled, wholly unfit for an interview with his brother, his heart beat so fast that it half suffocated him.

'For God's sake give me some water !' he exclaimed.

'My poor lad,' said Randolph, in his kindest voice, taking no notice, however, of his request, 'you are quite worn out ; and if you go to Newgate in such a state, you will be down with jail-fever before many days are over.'

'I can't help that,' said Hugo, shortly.

'Ay, you can help it, and for my sake you must help it !' said Randolph, with real earnestness in his tone. 'Do you think I care naught for you ? Do you think it has not tortured me to find you turned against me—to find you thus thwarting me ? Come back to me, lad, ere it is too late. All shall be forgiven and forgotten. The king will reward you—I will reward you ; half the estate shall be yours, and you shall be to me the most trusted, the most loved in all the world.'

Never had Hugo heard such words from his brother, never had his love revealed itself as now in look and tone ; the blind devotion, the unfailing loyalty of a lifetime had been nourished on the poorest fare. As a child a rough caress had kept him happy for days ; but such events had been rare indeed. He recalled them vividly just because they had been so infrequent. Then in later life Randolph had been stern and exacting, only on rare occasions he would drop a few words of praise or of

approval, and thus bind Hugo to him with the ardent, unquestioning loyalty which asked so little and gave so much.

And now for the first time in his life this stern, hard man unbent, humbled himself, pleaded with one whom he had hitherto peremptorily commanded, and in the most dangerously tempting way exerted again all his influence on the susceptible nature which till now he had kept in slavery.

A curious fascinating smile stole over his strong face, lit up the usually cold eyes, and flickered about the hard mouth.

‘You are faint and hungry—oh, very hungry! I know all about it. And I am dying to feed you, Hugo. Come, you have withstood me far too long. But I’ll forgive all, for you have shown what mettle you are made of. Only delay no more. You are almost fainting; I’ll get you a cup of sack—but see, just sign this paper first, and then all will be well, and naught shall come betwixt us more.’

A vague, delicious hope stole over Hugo. Might there not be some loophole of escape—some permissible compromise? He took the paper in his hands, and with some difficulty read it. Had he not been acquainted with legal phraseology, it would have hopelessly baffled him; but as it was, he made out that, wrapped up in many words and obscured by rambling sentences, the document was nothing less than a declaration that he would reveal all that might be of service in unravelling the plot. It was put in a very ambiguous way, but that was, he felt convinced, the drift of the whole thing.

He fell back into his former position, and thought, or rather struggled to think. His brain reeled. A wild confusion of possibilities seemed to crowd around him. Randolph, in the meanwhile, produced a goose-quill and an ink-horn, and drew a small oaken table forward.

‘Come,’ he said, patting his head caressingly, ‘you are so weary, dear old fellow, you scarce know whether you are on your head or your heels. Make haste and sign this. Then we will come home, and Jerry shall see to you. Come, lad, ’tis your duty to both king and country—no private considerations can weigh against those two. Were it such a preposterous thing to do, think you I should ask it of you? Come, sign, and trust one who loves you better than you think for.’

Once again it was Joyce on one side, with independence and conscience-hearkening, and Randolph on the other, with obedience and lawful authority! It was the new strength against the incalculable power of old association and the habits of a

lifetime. If only Randolph would not look at him with such kind eyes! If only he would once more treat him harshly! Right, duty, which way did they point? Ah! yes; but, even if he knew, could he obey? Fiends seemed dragging him down, down, into a peace which he knew would prove bondage. A hideous confusion reigned within him. Right! was there such a thing at all? Would not expediency prove the safest rule of life?

‘Ah, God! God! the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful!’

The words, mechanically repeated by him day by day, now rose in a bitter cry from his soul. In his anguish he called for help as though on a fellow-being.

‘Come, lad,’ said Randolph, smiling kindly, ‘sign and have done with it. Delays are dangerous.’

‘Yes,’ said Hugo, springing to his feet with an energy that amazed his brother—‘yes, they are in truth dangerous!’

He tore the paper in half, he tore it again and again, he flung the fragments from him as though they had been polluted.

‘There is my answer, and I have no more to say; now do your worst!’

There was a breathless pause. The two brothers stood facing each other; a deep dark flush spread over the face of the elder—the wrath of a strong man baffled, the hatred of a tempter foiled, gleamed in his eyes; the younger, his gaze fixed on his guardian’s face, grew each instant paler and paler, as though the struggle to resist that fiendish temptation were robbing him of life itself.

‘By my troth!’ said Randolph, at length, in a low passionate voice, ‘you shall have your fool’s choice! I *will* do my worst!’

Hugo’s lips parted as though he would fain have spoken, but no words came. He made a step forward, and a gesture — was it of entreaty, or was it merely for physical help? That would remain for ever unknown, for he fell senseless to the ground. Randolph bent for an instant over the inanimate form, then strode to the door, once more returned, once more looked anxiously at the ashy face, hesitated a moment, then, with a fearful oath, turned away and left the room, locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER XX.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

Come, sleep, oh, sleep, the certain knot of peace,
 The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe,
 The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
 The indifferent judge between the high and low ;
 With shield of proof shield me from out the prease
 Of those fierce darts despair at me doth throw ;
 Oh, make in me those civil wars to cease ;
 I will good tribute pay if thou do so.

SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

THE horses, still bearing the marks of hard riding, stood in waiting at the door of the inn. There was a confusion of many voices, many feet, many wheels, and many street cries. Hugo was vaguely conscious of it all as he was led forth. Another high clear voice was calling, 'Strawberries, ripe strawberries !'

A plaintive-looking girl was trailing along with a large basket calling, 'Rosemary and briar ! rosemary and briar !'

'What !' exclaimed one and another in the group gathered to watch the horses. 'One of the plot men, say you ?' 'A Rye-House man !' 'A rogue !' 'A traitor !' 'Lord save us ! but he's a fine young spark !' 'Look you, there he comes. Rare and pale too, one would 'a thought they had 'most racked un.' 'Lord love ye, they can't put un to the torture now ! not except in Scotland with Lauderdale.' 'But a stripling he be ; naught but a stripling !' 'Down with all traitors, say I—and long live the king !'

This led to a small outburst of loyalty, and amid a storm of mingled cheers and groans, and a shower of stones and refuse from which the burly constable did his best to shelter the prisoner, Hugo was led off in the direction of Newgate.

And now they had left Cornhill behind them, and were making their way through crowded Cheapside. Now they caught a passing glimpse of the busy masons and builders at work on new St. Paul's, and now gloomy Newgate Street lay before them. At last the grim pile itself loomed into sight ; they paused before the grisly-looking gate. Hugo was dimly aware that the burly constable carried in his belongings,—the valise which had been left at Longbridge Hall, and the lute-case. He wondered what would become of them, he vaguely

wondered what would become of himself ; he followed mechanically, a constable on each side of him, and the chief constable in advance, while an official took them into a small room, where the governor of Newgate was waiting to interview them. It was only by an intolerable effort that he roused himself sufficiently to answer the questions which were put to him. Then after a few minutes the men who had hitherto been his guardians prepared to leave. He roused himself again, bade them good-day, and thanked them for their courtesy. He became conscious that he was alone in this horrible place,—that his last friends had left him—that Randolph had finally deserted him, and that he was at the mercy of a brute.

The governor regarded him fixedly for a minute, evidently taking his measure. Then he made an entry in a large book upon the table, and struck a bell which stood beside him, upon which an official appeared at the door.

‘Twenty pound fetters,’ said the governor, ‘and one of the prisoners to rivet them.’

The man disappeared,—Hugo stood motionless, the expression of his face not one whit altered. The governor regarded him again and yet more keenly. ‘Cool customer,’ he remarked, ‘will need discipline!’

The door opened again, a jailer entered, a man with small twinkling eyes and shaggy hair, carrying the keys of his office. He was followed by a much more repulsive-looking prisoner, who bore the heavy irons which the governor had ordered. Without a word Hugo submitted to necessity and allowed the chains to be riveted upon his ankles. Just at the time he minded the touch of the dirty prisoner’s hands more than the irons themselves. Meanwhile the governor was giving directions to the jailer, and Hugo saw a gleam of fiendish amusement pass over the features of the prisoner who was still busy with his fetters. This somehow nettled him, stung into life his desire for resistance. He faced round upon the governor.

‘What right have you to load me with irons before trial, sir?’ he asked, with far more strength and fire in his manner than the man had given him credit for.

‘Right!’ roared the governor, with a brutal laugh. ‘Odds fish! to hear the young spark! Why, bless your young innocence, you’ve no “right” in Newgate!’

‘How about the Habeas Corpus Act, sir?’ said Hugo, calmly.

The governor smiled, but more respectfully.

'Ah, 'tis true, you have me there, young sir. There is that cursed Habeas Corpus, and a bad day it was for merry England when that was made law—defrauding honest jailers of their due, and favouring knaves and vagabonds. We were better off in Newgate four years ago, when those meddlesome Commons left us to ourselves, weren't we, Scroop?'

The jailer acquiesced with a sardonic grin—the governor broke again into loud brutal laughter.

'Well, well,' he said, after a minute, recovering himself. 'We waste time, and time don't crawl to the governor of Newgate, whatsoever it do to the prisoners. Away with him, Scroop—discipline and the dungeon.'

And with this terse, alliterative, and alluring sentence, Hugo found himself dismissed.

Scroop dragged him along interminable and dingy passages, the very air of which seemed laden with all that was foul and lowering. When he stumbled, as he very frequently did from weariness and the weight of the irons about his feet, the jailer swore at him.

'I'd have you know, sir, that there be such things as whips in Newgate,' he said, with a savage grin. 'Ay, and prisoners to wield them, too, with right good will on their mates.'

'I have had enough of thrashings though for many a day to come,' said Hugo, smiling a little. 'And it is scarcely reasonable to growl when you have laden me with such fetters.'

Something in his tone made the jailer turn and look at him more attentively than he had yet done. Brutal as the man was, he could yet perceive that the prisoner was somehow different from any prisoner with whom he had yet come into contact. He swore no more, he walked more slowly, for the first time in his life he wondered. What was there about this new-comer that appealed to him so strangely? Silently he helped him down a flight of stone steps, at the foot of which he paused to unlock a narrow door. As it swung back, dismally creaking on its hinges, there was a sound of rushing, thumping, scrambling within.

'Rats!' said Scroop, laconically. 'But they'll not attack you, sir, an you leave them alone! Plenty of garbage for them to feed on in Newgate!' he laughed grimly.

Hugo glanced round. The wretched little cell was absolutely bare, save that in one place the grey flagstones were slightly raised as though to form a bed, and another stone was laid across at the head for a pillow. The walls were reeking with

damp, the atmosphere was insufferable, what little air and light there was, came from a small grating which opened into a passage at the foot of the stairs. He was past complaining, however. He just dropped down on the stone bed without a word. The jailer stood perplexed—he was not used to this sort of thing.

‘Well, for a hard bed your honour seems to take it pretty easy!’ he said, regarding him curiously.

‘Water—for God’s sake!’ said Hugo, faintly.

Scroop hesitated a moment, looked again at him fixedly, and finally walked away, returning before long with a pitcher of water and a hunch of bread, which he set down on the floor beside the prisoner. Then without another word he went out, closing the door noisily behind him. Hugo involuntarily shuddered as the key grated in the rusty lock. It roused him, however, and he sat up and drank thirstily, then once more fell back on his stony couch, too weary as yet to eat, though the bread, for which a few hours before he would have given much, stood on the floor beside him. But the delay proved fatal, for not many minutes after he was roused from a state of stupor by the sound of pattering feet, and looking up he saw that three fat, brown rats were at work upon the bread, gnawing, nibbling, fighting over it. He found himself idly speculating what they would do when it was eaten, but as to moving a finger, driving them off, rescuing the bread, or eating it afterwards, no power on earth could have made him do it.

Gradually the little light that had crept in through the grating faded away, the cell became quite dark; he could no longer watch the rats, he could only hear them and occasionally feel them as they scampered about the place; their noise kept him from sleeping, their frequent raids kept him in an uncomfortable state of wakeful suspense. One thing was very clear to him: the lifelong imprisonment, if it was to be in this cell, would not be of very long duration. He wondered whether death would free him that night; wondered whether dying hurt much, wondered whether this strange sinking, this feeling of being dragged down, down, endlessly down, might perhaps be the beginning of the end.

All at once the sound of a human voice made him start violently. He sat up, and tried to make out in the murky darkness where the speaker could be.

‘Art weary of life?’ said the voice.

‘In these quarters, ay, verily,’ replied Hugo.

'You can change them this moment, an you will,' said the voice.

He thought that it came from the grating, and was somewhat reassured.

'How can that be? Tell me, for the love of God!' he exclaimed.

'Nay,' said the voice. 'But for the love of gold.'

'Money!' exclaimed Hugo. 'Can that take me out of this accursed place.'

'It can take you to a dry and spacious room, and give you a bed fit for a Christian to lie on; it can give you food and wine, and it can lighten your fetters.'

'Ten gold pieces,' exclaimed Hugo, eagerly, 'if you will but take me hence!'

There was a sound of laughter; it was like a mocking fiend.

'Ten guineas! No, my duck, you don't stir under twenty.'

'Twenty!' Hugo mused a minute. All the money he had in the world was the fifty guineas which Randolph had given him at Longbridge Hall. He must not stake the whole of this even for his release and better quarters. 'Well, then, twenty guineas.'

'Twenty guineas will but take you to the common ward; 'tis full to-night, they be packed close as herrings in a tub!'

'Then will I most assuredly stay here,' said Hugo, resolutely.

He fell back again on the stones.

'But,' said the voice, 'an you stay in this damp hole, you're not long for this world. The toughest can but stand it a few weeks. You're signing your own death-warrant, and all for the sake of a few guineas more or less. Now for sixty guineas I'll get you into the press-yard, where you can live like a prince, have your fine friends to visit you by day, and feed upon the fat of the land.'

'I can't pay it,' said Hugo; 'I haven't such a sum in the world.'

There was truth in his voice. The invisible being knew that he must reduce his terms.

'Well, then, let us say fifty and end the haggling.'

'Nay,' said Hugo, 'tis impossible; leave me and torment me not further.'

'Well, since you will have it,' said the voice. Then again after a pause, 'One more chance. There's the castle—fine, airy rooms, plenty of light, good food, though not so good as

the press-yard; I'll get you a private chamber in the castle, if you will give me forty gold pieces.'

'Agreed!' said Hugo, catching at the first proposal which it was really in his power to accept. He took the sum named from his purse, and Scroop, hearing the chink of the gold pieces, lost no time in unlocking the door and helping the prisoner—almost carrying him, in fact—up the stone steps which led from his dungeon.

'Nat!' he roared, in his stentorian voice, 'bring the fetters!'

The vaulted passage rang and echoed, dismally returning the last word. Nat came scurrying along with a lantern in one hand and his implements in the other. He was the same evil-looking prisoner who had been employed to rivet the twenty-pound irons, and he grinned derisively at Hugo as he proceeded to release him and to fasten instead round his ankles a far lighter pair of shackles in which he could move with very little discomfort. When this was done Scroop took him by the arm and led him along labyrinths of stone passages, which he could but dimly perceive by the flickering light of the lantern.

'The common debtors' side!' said Scroop, jerking his thumb in the direction of a large door, 'and the common felons!' He nodded his head in the opposite direction.

Their course seemed to lie midway between the two, and Hugo was relieved to find himself in a less noisome atmosphere. Scroop dragged him up flight after flight of stone stairs, and at length paused before a narrow door, which he proceeded to unlock.

'You may thank your stars, young sir,' he said, gloomily, 'that I let you out on such low terms. Mark my words, many don't get such quarters as these under five hundred pounds.'

Hugo wondered what princely accommodation was about to be offered him, and was not unreasonably wrathful when he found that this private room was of the smallest, and was fitted with three barrack-beds, two of which were already occupied.

He looked at the two sleeping forms. What might they not be? Murderers, for aught he knew! Surely the dungeon and the rats with solitude would have been preferable to this!

'Tis over-late to see to the bedding to-night,' said Scroop, indicating the vacant plank bed. 'You will be softer than stones, anyway, and to-morrow you can have a flock mattress, an you like to pay a crown for it a fortnight.'

The occupant of one of the beds stirred a little, and finally turned round to look at these disturbers of his night's rest.

'Is this what you call a private chamber?' said Hugo, wrathfully. And, with a deep oath, he dragged himself across the room and flung himself down upon the barrack-bed.

Scroop regarded him for a moment with a sarcastic grin, then shrugging his shoulders left the cell without any further remark, locking and bolting the door with ostentatious noisiness which was not lost upon Hugo.

Disappointed as he was with his new quarters, however, to be free from the rats was a great gain. His two companions were silent enough, the room was dark, and Hugo, though wretched both in mind and body, was too young to lie awake long.

He slept soundly for some hours. When he awoke the room was dimly lighted by the pale moonbeams which struggled in through the small window. He looked round, fancying himself at Mondisfield; he stared at the heavy iron bars across the window, which stood out black and hard against the moonlight. It was not Mondisfield! Where was it? With a vague uneasiness he started up, but instantly felt the fetters upon his ankles. It was not Mondisfield! Good God! it was Newgate!

Once more he heard Randolph's cold voice, 'Are you aware that the penalty for misprision of treason is imprisonment for life?' And fiends' voices seemed to take up the words and echo them in a jeering chorus, 'Here for life, for life! Here for life!'

He sprang up in a sort of frenzy—he struggled vainly to reach the barred but unglazed window high up in the wall, from which the cool night air blew in. He rushed at the door, he pulled, strained, dragged it, as though by all his endeavours it could be induced to move a hair's-breadth. What was reason to one who had realised the meaning of lifelong imprisonment! The door must yield! Were mere wood and iron to prove more powerful than the passionate craving for freedom which seemed to rend his being? Once more back to the window, once more a perception that it was hopeless; then back to the door and the unavailing struggle with the merciless lock, which all his efforts would not so much as shake. It was all vain—vain! And he was here for life!

With a stifled cry, he threw himself face downwards on the floor. Effort was useless, and yet this awful craving to get out seemed as though its fierceness would kill him. Panting,

exhausted with the bodily exertion, and torn in pieces by that terrible revolt against his fate, he might have lain there for hours had not a voice fallen upon his ears and startled him into attention. Was it his fancy? Was it merely the recollection of some psalm he had heard at Mondisfield?

‘What if in prison I must dwell,
May I not there converse with Thee?
Save me from sin, Thy wrath and hell,
Call me Thy child, and I am free.
No bolts or bars can keep Thee out,
None can confine a holy soul,
The streets of heaven it walks about,
None may its liberties control.’

‘Whose words are those?’ he exclaimed, quieted for a moment, partly because they seemed like a message from Mondisfield, partly because there was something soothing in the rhythm and in the tone of the voice.

‘The words are Mr. Richard Baxter’s,’ said the voice. ‘And I, who speak them, am one Francis Bampffield, a prisoner for conscience’ sake.’

With that the speaker rose, felt about for flint and steel, and in a minute had kindled a rushlight; then he came and bent over the prostrate form of his fellow-prisoner.

‘I heard not your entrance, sir,’ he said. ‘I slept soundly. Is there aught that I can do for you? You seem in sore distress.’

‘Distress!’ exclaimed Hugo, half raising himself and looking into the face of the old man who bent over him. ‘I am in prison for life, sir—for life!’ He broke into a discordant laugh, which speedily changed to uncontrollable sobbing, as he fell back once more into his former position.

‘I, too, am in prison for life,’ said Bampffield. ‘Be comforted; ’twill prove less irksome than you think for.’

‘No, no!’ cried Hugo, starting up again. ‘You are old, sir, or you could not say so. Oh! for the love of God, sir, tell me, is there no hope of escape? I must get out, or I shall die!’

The old frenzy was returning; once more he rushed blindly at the door as though he would tear it from its hinges. Bampffield watched him for a minute with silent compassion; then, going up to him, he drew him away with gentle force, which Hugo was in no state to resist.

‘You look both ill and weary,’ he said, in his quiet, measured

tones. 'An you will put up with it, my bed is at your service. Lie down—slumber will do more for you than I can.'

Hugo's native courtesy returned to him, and in a voice which contrasted oddly with that of his passionate outbreak, he thanked Bampffield for his kindness, but would not hear of robbing him of his bed. However, the old man was not to be resisted. He took the law into his own hands, made Hugo lie down, fetched him food and water, and forced him to swallow them, talking the while in a soothing, continuous sort of way.

'Yes, as you say, I am old,' he remarked—'old enough, I trow, to be your grandsire. But you will accord me an old man's privilege, and hearken to my experience. Black times you may have, but, believe me, none so black as the first night in jail. Believe me, sir, there is naught so hard but custom lightens it. I speak not from hearsay; I speak that which I know, having been oft in jail, and for long years. Men may imprison your body, but no man can against your will imprison you.'

Hugo was silent, musing over the words which fell strangely on his ear, since he was not accustomed to think much about any such matters as Bampffield hinted at.

The old man watched him keenly, wondering what crime had brought upon him so terrible a punishment. The pure face with its beautiful outlines, the dark grey eyes with their deep, thoughtful look, did not lend themselves readily to the idea of any crime at all. But he was too much of a gentleman to ask him any question, and indeed before long he saw that the new prisoner had fallen asleep, much as a child does after an outburst of passion. He did not realise how wonderful had been the relief of his presence, or what an immense influence his mere age possessed for one of Hugo's reverential nature. But he felt strangely drawn towards this new occupant of his prison-cell, and unspeakably thankful that one who would effect no slight change in the monotonous life, bid fair to prove a welcome addition to their number.

CHAPTER XXI.

GRIFFITH DOUBTFULLY REGARDS HUGO.

Suspicious among thoughts are like bats among birds, they ever fly by twilight.—BACON.

It was broad daylight when John Griffith, minister of Dunnings Alley Chapel, Bishopsgate Street, awoke. He glanced sleepily across the prison-cell, vaguely wondering whether his friend Bampffield had yet risen, and perceiving some curious change as he looked, he rubbed his eyes vigorously, and looked again. Why, what was this? Instead of a hoary head there was a mass of curly light-brown hair. Where had his friend gone to? And who was this new-comer? He rose hastily, but his curiosity had to remain unsatisfied, for he perceived that Bampffield was at his devotions at the further end of the cell, and the stranger slept as if nothing on earth would wake him. Griffith was almost irritated by the sight of his peaceful repose. This must be the graceless gallant who had stumbled in, likely enough half-drunk, the night before; he remembered the incident well enough now, and he remembered, too, the deep oath which he had uttered as he flung himself down upon the vacant bed. How he had managed to obtain possession of Bampffield's quarters was a mystery, and Griffith grudged them to him, and was not at all inclined to wish this intruder welcome.

'How now, Bampffield!' he exclaimed, as the old man rose from his knees; 'have you been sleeping on boards? And did this godless, drunken blasphemer turn you from your own bed?'

Bampffield smiled.

'Gently, good friend Griffith,' he said. 'Methinks those epithets scarce apply to our new friend.'

'Friend!' said Griffith, looking with scorn at the gay crimson doublet which the stranger had thrown off, and the costly lace cravat which lay beside it. 'Friend! Bampffield! Nay, but a godless Whitehall idler, an I mistake not. You slept last night when he entered, but I saw him stagger in, drunk, no doubt, and swearing at the jailer with profane lips.'

'Nay, he was not drunk, poor lad, but ill, and weary, and half-starved. Courtier, idler, swearer, he may be, yet is there

a grace and winsomeness about him which methinks is not all court breeding.'

'You would see good in every living soul!' said Griffith, impatiently; 'I shall form my own judgment upon him. Is he like to remain here long?'

'I trow that he will outlast both of us,' said Bampffield, with a curiously pathetic smile. 'We are old and grey-headed, but yon poor boy is but nineteen, or at most twenty, and he, too, has lifelong imprisonment to face. I found him heart-broken last night, tearing and straining at the door as though he would open it or die.'

'Whereupon you offered him your bed,' said Griffith; 'and the grace and winsomeness of which you speak did not hinder the profane worldling from letting a venerable man of seventy sleep on a plank bed.'

'You wrong him,' said Bampffield. 'I forced him to take it; nor could I have slept after witnessing so sad a scene. I had better employment.'

'I have no patience with the rising generation!' said Griffith, vehemently. He could not add that he had no patience with his friend for spending half the night in prayer over the sorrows of an unknown stranger, but he relieved himself by inveighing against the depravity of youth in general, and of this youth in particular.

Hugo, disturbed by the voices, was struggling to wake up; he had heard the last part of the conversation in a half-dreamy state, and Griffith's vehement generality made him open his eyes. He looked round and saw a tall, gaunt, grey-haired man with a stern and hard expression. He was clad in the habit of a divine, and though he was beyond doubt a very worthy man, and though Hugo was quite aware of the fact, and was conscious, too, that he ought to be thankful enough to find himself in such good company, he, nevertheless, formed the strongest aversion to Dr. John Griffith at first sight.

'I wish you a good-morning, sir,' said Griffith, bowing stiffly. 'Had I known that you were in need last night, I should gladly have afforded you any assistance in my power. But you entered this cell with profane words, to which, I bless God, these walls have not of late echoed.'

Now in those days swearing was a cultivated art; it was considered part of good breeding. Hugo, being of a quiet nature, and more given to thinking than to talking, probably swore much less than most men; he had indeed been many a time taken to task by Randolph and by Denham for his want

of brilliancy in this respect. To be now reproved for a single oath under exceptionally trying circumstances amazed him. Moreover, he resented the interference.

'I am sorry to have disturbed you, sir,' he replied, coldly. 'As to modes of speech, my tongue is my own.'

He tried to rise, but fell back again with an irrepressible exclamation of pain. Bampfield, who had listened with regret to the words which had passed between his companions, now drew near to the bedside.

'Are you rested?' he asked, kindly. 'Nay, I see you are still but weary.'

'I have to thank you for some hours of forgetfulness,' said Hugo, looking up at him gratefully.

'Are you in prison for crime, or for conscience' sake?' asked Griffith, sternly.

'For both, sir,' said Hugo, flushing painfully.

Griffith regarded him for a moment in silence.

'That is impossible!' he said, with a stern emphasis. 'Impossible, sir!'

An indescribable look stole over Hugo's face; he glanced at Bampfield as though to appeal to him against this hard verdict.

'You are still very weary?' questioned Bampfield. 'Is there naught that we can do for you?'

'I don't know,' said Hugo, frowning with pain. 'I am beaten almost to a jelly.'

'Ha! how was that?' said Griffith, with sudden interest, for he was a doctor of medicine as well as a divine. Then, his old antagonism to Hugo returning—'But perhaps you deserved it.'

The muscles of the new-comer's face worked convulsively; this ruthless handling of an old wound was hard to bear.

'I—did deserve it,' he said, in a low voice, and therewith turned his face from the light, and was deaf to all other questions.

Bampfield looked reproachfully at his companion, and John Griffith softened a little towards the new-comer, reflected that he might have repented of his crime, and, turning away, began vigorously to make preparations for breakfast.

However, though Griffith's question had been heartless, it proved to be exactly the tonic which Hugo needed. Bampfield's kindness had saved him from blank despair, but that sharp, that torturing 'Perhaps you deserved it,' recalled to him the past, and with the hatred of the past an almost

passionate resolve that the future should be very different. What was it that had made him sink so low that night at Mondisfield? Love of life had, in truth, proved strong, but it was not merely love of life which had made him yield. Had another man held a pistol to his head, and given him the choice between death and crime, he would have assuredly chosen death. The power had lain not in the pistol, but in Randolph; not in the mere thought of death, but in the thought of a violent death at his brother's hands.

He had allowed himself to be held in bondage by that stronger nature. Randolph had been to him as a god, and he, by yielding with tame and blind submission, by ceding to another what he had no right to cede—the direction of his will and his conscience—had proved himself to be less than a man. It flashed upon him as a sort of discovery that words which he had heard in a lifeless, mechanical way, were no poetical image but a stern reality, a fact as true for him in the seventeenth century as, long ago, to the listeners on the Eastern mountain-side. ‘No man can serve two masters.’ He would, to begin with, forfeit the right to be called ‘man’ at all—would be a mere cipher, an incarnate compromise; and ultimately he must by the very nature of things give himself wholly either to one or the other, either to the right master or the wrong. He knew well enough that he had of late vaguely desired to do right, that for months he had been also drawn, almost irresistibly, more and more under Randolph's influence. He had been sorely perplexed by the clashing of duties, but at the fatal moment had been quite well aware that he had deliberately chosen amiss.

It was not, however, till this miserable morning in Newgate that he saw all things clearly; realised that there is only one Master whom a man can serve without sinking into degrading slavery, only one Master whose service is perfect freedom. The old Church prayer returned to his mind, the Latin version of which had till now been an enigma to him—

‘Quem nosse vivere.
Cui servire regnare.’

And hitherto he had not ‘Served,’ but had been dragged down by the power of circumstance; hitherto he had not ‘Reigned,’ overcoming by virtue of the Truth and the Right; he had lived in a despicable slavery—nay, scarcely lived at all, so vague and misty had been his knowledge.

To pass from a shadowy belief in a sort of Fetish, to actual

knowledge of a Living Being, is like passing from death into life—like throwing wide a closed casement, and letting the fresh air revive one panting for breath.

It seemed to Hugo as though the purity of Joyce, the charity of Bampfield, the thoughtful friendship of Mary Denham, the free forgiveness of Colonel Wharncliffe, blended together and helped him to a vision of One whom he had vowed to serve manfully but had not served—One whom he had vaguely worshipped but never before known.

Time, then, was nothing—place was nothing! Bampfield had spoken truly—men might imprison the body, but here in Newgate one might ‘Know’ and ‘Live,’—might ‘Serve’ and ‘Reign.’ He could bear now to say those terrible words which last night had half maddened him,—‘Life-long imprisonment,’—could pray as he had never prayed before the words of Mary Denham’s collect.

He said no more about being beaten to a jelly, but got up, eager to begin his new life. He paused in tying the cravat which had excited John Griffith’s ire to help that worthy, who was in difficulties with a steaming saucepan full of porridge. He stifled his inclination to laugh at the portentous length of the grace which Dr. Griffith pronounced over the very frugal meal, and he accepted Bampfield’s offer of hospitality with gratitude, gulping down the tasteless and ill cooked food with heroic resolution, and inwardly debating whether he might not in course of time improve upon Griffith’s cooking, and serve up porridge which savoured less of smoke and the pot.

‘Is the food supplied to prisoners?’ he asked, anxious to find out what his expenses would be in his new abode.

‘A small quantity is supplied,’ said Bampfield, ‘but scarce sufficient to keep body and soul together. You can, however, purchase what you will. Nowhere is money a greater power than in prison.’

‘Ay, that I discovered last night,’ said Hugo. ‘It was not till the jailer had cajoled me out of forty gold pieces that he brought me hither out of a pestilent dungeon.’

‘They ever get heavy premiums in that way,’ said Bampfield, ‘and even now you will be charged ten shillings and sixpence rental by Scroop, and one shilling each week by the female who cleans the room and makes the fires.’

Hugo looked grave. But ten more gold pieces remained within his purse, and if for mere bed and lodging he must pay fourteen shillings a week, his resources would ere long be exhausted. Moreover, there would be his share in lights, and

coals and food to be thought of. The money would not last him much more than two months. Two months out of a lifetime!

Presently, when Griffith had retired to the further end of the cell to prepare a sermon, Bampfield heard all Hugo's story; he heard the outline of facts that is, and his age and experience, together with an innate perception of the new-comer's character, enabled him to fill in the gaps which necessarily occurred in Hugo's narrative. Nor was it difficult to imagine the extraordinary ascendancy which the elder brother had exercised over the mind of the younger. Puritan as he was, Bampfield nevertheless discerned at once that Hugo was one of the artist type—receptive, responsive, by nature a worshipper; over such a character how easy it was to picture the mastery of a strong man, passionately loved. He could not but hope great things from one who could break such a chain, and Hugo's grief at the separation from Randolph, which was more apparent by what he left unsaid than by any words which he could have uttered, touched the old man deeply.

'Ay,' he said, 'separation from kith and kin, in belief and practice, is a hard thing to face, but it is what your Lord bore in His life. "Even His brethren did not believe in Him." Many a time those who suffer for conscience' sake will have to heal their smarts with those words.'

'And you, sir?' asked Hugo. 'Did you, too, have this to bear? Tell me of those imprisonments of which you spoke last night.'

'In good sooth, many are the friends whom I have lost,' said Bampfield. 'Think not that I blame them—nay, oft-times thinking over it I blame myself; for did we live as we ought—did not our failings dim the Christ-light—let us hold what opinions we would, folks would be slow to leave us. My tale is but a short and uneventful one. I was born of an old and honourable Devonshire family, and was educated at Wadham in the university of Oxford. My young days were cast in evil times; I was then a loyalist, and an ordained minister of the Church of England. My cure was at Sherbourne in Dorsetshire, and there I continued to read Common Prayer publicly longer than any other minister in Dorsetshire, for which I incurred some danger—it hath been ever my fortune to go with the losing side, you see!'

He smiled, a curiously pathetic smile, which touched Hugo.

'At that time I was also Prebendary of Exeter Cathedral. It was not till lately that I found, as I thought, many matters

in the Church which called loudly for reformation. Mr Richard Baxter was the means of bringing me over to the Parliamentary party, and soon after evil days began for us. The king returned, the Act of Uniformity was passed, and there was naught for me to do but to quit both my living and my prebend, being utterly dissatisfied with the conditions which it imposed. I was from that time forth a marked man, and soon after was apprehended and cast into jail for worshipping God in my own family. I smile now at the remembrance. There were five-and-twenty of us thrust into one room with but one bed! However, we passed the time peacefully in religious exercises.'

'And did they keep you there long?' asked Hugo, with the keen interest of a hearer who can realise the situation.

'Nay, but a short time. However, freedom was not meant for me. I was again apprehended for preaching, for refusing to keep back the message entrusted to me, even though this free land had been bound in slavish chains by laws devised by Clarendon and approved by the king. That time I was in jail eight years. 'Twas in Dorsetshire jail, a gruesome place enough.'

'Did it seem very long?' asked Hugo, a little huskily.

'It was long, yet I knew that it was not too long—it was the training my Lord thought best for me. Moreover, no one could hinder my preaching in the jail—I preached every day.'

'And when you were liberated?' questioned Hugo.

'Then I wandered about the country again for a while, gaining a hearing when and where I could, but I was again apprehended and cast into Salisbury jail. After that, once more freed, I came to London and gathered a congregation first at the chapel in Devonshire Square, and later at Pinner's Hall. Last year I was preaching there when there broke in several officers, who dragged me down from my place and carried me off under guard to bring me before the Lord Mayor. I was here in Newgate after that for a time, but being released found myself in worse odour than ever, and shortly afterwards, in March of this year, I and my friend, Dr. Griffith, were both committed to Newgate for refusing the oaths of supremacy and allegiance, and here are we like to remain the rest of our lives.'

Hugo mused for a while in silence. The story was perplexing to one of his way of thinking, but no one could for a moment doubt Bampfield's honesty, and what was more, his

holiness. He had not yet seen enough of the world to realise that the sins of any body of men sooner or later cause a schism in that body—that the Church by her sins lost many of her bravest and noblest sons, and that those who outside her pale fought against tyranny, and intolerance, and maddening restrictions, were fighting on God's side. Instinctively, however, he honoured the zeal for truth, the scrupulous conscientiousness which the Nonconformists had shown; instinctively, too, he realised that he must avoid all controversy, and be content to learn what he could from these two old men, whose experience had been so strange and varied.

Fortunately the beautiful reverence, which was one of his most marked characteristics, stood him now in good stead, and kept peace in the cell where otherwise there must have been discord, seeing that nature and nurture had tuned the three so differently.

Bampffield had only just finished his story when the door was unlocked and Scroop entered, followed by a surly-looking prisoner, who carried Hugo's valise and lute-case. The jailer directed him to put them down on the barrack-bed which he had allotted last night to the new-comer, and then proceeded in his grim way to enlighten the owner as to various prison rules and regulations. Hugo could hardly listen to the fellow, so impatient was he to open the lute-case. When at last the jailer had departed, he began to tear open the straps and clasps with eager fingers, deaf to Griffith's questions, and mindful only of Joyce. The lid raised, he looked eagerly in and found, securely packed away beside his lute, three books:—a volume containing five of Shakespere's plays; a copy of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, but recently published; and a little edition of St. John's Gospel. On the fly-leaf of this last was written, in a clear, but tremulous handwriting—

'For my dear love. They are all the books I have.'

Tears rushed to Hugo's eyes, a passionate longing consumed him for one more sight of Joyce—Joyce, his sweet, true-hearted love! Joyce who belonged to him, and to whom he belonged by right of that mysterious union of souls which no prison walls—not even the walls of this hellish Newgate—could sever. Unable to see the words which were to him so full of comfort, he pressed the book to his lips and kissed it fervently.

'Sir,' said John Griffith, sternly, 'I trust you take no rash oath. Tell me, I pray, why you thus irreverently press the holy book to lips which of late spoke profane words.'

'Beshrew me, sir, they shall speak such words no more,' said Hugo, quickly, his rapture of love lending him a large generosity, which put up with the doctor's interruption, and made his impatience of the previous night seem contemptible.

Bampfild glanced at him for a moment, a smile of sympathy illumining his worn features. This new-comer was already proving a blessing to him; he had brought an atmosphere of youth, and hope, and love into the dreary cell, which refreshed the old man greatly and relieved the weary monotony of the prison life.

On the Saturday, however, when Hugo, somewhat cheered and already growing accustomed to his new quarters, took his lute and began to play, Bampfild's conscience would not permit him to keep silence.

'My friend,' he said, 'this is the Sabbath. Will you not keep it with me, and lay aside worldly things?'

Hugo, who would have done anything to please the gentle old man, at once put by the lute and patiently listened to a series of readings and discourses, finishing with a debate between Griffith and Bampfild as to the observance of the seventh, or the first day of the week. But when, on the following day, Griffith took him sternly to task for reading Shakespere, he was less patient. Not being accustomed to the Puritan method of observing Sunday, it seemed to him intolerable to be required all at once to keep both the rest-day of the seventh-day Christian and the rest-day of the Baptist. It needed all his innate courtesy to enable him to pass the two days in a way which should not hurt the feelings of either of the old men, and on the Monday he was so chafed and wearied by the restraint that he felt ready to quarrel with everybody and everything.

It was some relief to be allowed to take an hour's walk. One of the privileges of this part of Newgate consisted in the possession of a paved passage running between the outer wall and the building itself, a dreary enough place paved with Purbeck stone, and running to a length of some fifty feet or more. It was something, however, even to be in the open air, within hearing of the life and bustle of Newgate Street, and Hugo walked up and down, working off some of his weariness and despondency by the help of rapid and mechanical exercise.

As he paced to and fro a stranger happened to enter the court at the further end. Visitors frequented Newgate all day long in those times, and consorted freely with the prisoners; for, although the privations and discomforts of prison life in

the seventeenth century were much greater than in the present day, there was a sort of rude liberty and licence permitted which would scandalise the stern disciplinarians of our time.

The visitor was a man who quickly arrested the attention. There was something unusual about his person and mien which made every one look a second time at him. He moved with a peculiar ease and dignity, his face was calm, serene, and thoughtful; he seemed to walk the world as an acute observer of men and manners, but there was about him nothing of the censorious critic. Before all things he was sympathetic—in fact he observed every one with such deep sympathy that he practically lived with them, seeming almost to lose the sense of his own personality, so deeply was he absorbed in the life around him. He leant now against the grim doorway at the entrance to the paved yard, his easy attitude contrasting curiously with the gait of the downcast prisoner, who tramped doggedly to and fro.

Betterton—for it was none other than the great tragedian—watched every motion of the walker, watched keenly, but with that living sympathy which distinguishes the artist from the scientist.

A slight figure, clad in a crimson cloth doublet, black silk hose, and broad black hat, from which trailed a long yellow ostrich feather; a walk at once dejected and desperate, slightly uneven, too, as though the wayfarer were recovering from some illness; the head bent, the eyes fixed on the ground, the hands clasped behind him, the iron shackles which hung loosely on the shapely ankles clanking dismally at each step. The face he could not clearly see, it was hidden by the wide brim of the hat, until just as the prisoner had taken his third turn up and down some sound made him look up hastily. The actor, to his intense surprise, saw before him the strange, broad-browed face, with the great grey eyes, and the indefinable something which raised it above other faces. There could be no mistake—he was certain that it must be the young amateur tenor, the favourite at Will's, who not many weeks since had been applauded to the echo in very different circumstances. He stepped forward hastily.

‘Mr. Wharncliffe!’ he exclaimed, holding out his hand.

Hugo clutched at it as a drowning man clutches at a straw. To hear a familiar voice, to see the well-known and kindly face of Betterton in that dismal abode, gave him a momentary thrill of rapture. He was not long in telling the actor all his

tale, and Betterton listened with that sympathetic silence which is better far than words.

‘What can I do for you?’ he said, at the close.

‘Tell me first, an you will, what arrests have been made,’ said Hugo, anxiously.

‘Many warrants have been issued,’ said Betterton. ‘But I have heard naught of arresting any leading man save Lord Russell.’

‘Lord Russell!’ exclaimed Hugo, in astonishment.

‘Ay, he is in the Tower and to be brought to his trial shortly.’

‘And Colonel Sydney? Heard you aught of him?’

‘Nay, he is yet at large. I saw him yesternight, nor have I heard of his being involved in the plot.’

‘God be thanked!’ said Hugo, his face brightening. ‘You asked what you could do for me, sir. I should be greatly beholden to you an you would go to Colonel Sydney’s house, see him privately, and tell him all you have now heard from me.’

‘I will see him with pleasure,’ said Betterton. ‘And at once.’

‘Tell him, sir, that I will not risk writing, fearing to involve him in danger. But beg him to send me some word of counsel, and, if it may be, one of forgiveness.’ His voice faltered, he half broke down, but resumed, after a moment’s pause, ‘Tell him I know that I deserve to be despised by him—that I will bear it as a just punishment if it must be. But tell him, too, that I would die for him, that I would live in torture for him. Nay, tell him not that, ’tis like the false disciples who afterwards fled. Tell him no words of mine, but——’ he grasped the actor’s arm, looking into his eyes with an entreaty which Betterton never forgot, ‘but make him understand.’

‘I will do my best,’ said Betterton, simply. ‘I see well what your love for Mr. Sydney is, and can at least tell him of that.’

‘Ah!’ broke in Hugo, ‘you will never know what he is—never! He has been to me friend, guide, teacher—well-nigh father—to me who was naught to him—naught but a stranger. My God! and it is such a one that men deem cold and harsh—a traitor—one to be hunted from the land he loves!’

‘Time’s up, sir?’ shouted a grim voice.

The agitation, the light of love and devotion died out of Hugo’s face, and a stern look settled down upon his features.

‘Farewell,’ he said, grasping Betterton’s hand. ‘Farewell, and thank you.’

Then with a curious dignity of obedience he followed his imperious jailer, and disappeared within the gloomy pile.

The actor watched him out of sight, brushed away a tear from his eyes, and left the prison-yard looking graver than when he entered it.

CHAPTER XXII.

SYDNEY AND BETTERTON.

WILL. I pray you, what thinks he of our estate ?

KING H. Even as men wrecked upon a sand, that look to be washed off the next tide.—*King Henry V.*

It is a curious fact, but a fact borne out by the experience of most people, that the great actors in the drama of life, the characters who take the leading parts and the difficult rôles, are, as a rule, calmer and quieter in face of peril and in time of commotion than the lesser men who play humbler parts, and who, while involved in slighter risk, seem to be much more troubled about it. On that bright summer morning which followed Betterton's visit to Newgate, most men in any way connected with the Whig party were conscious that they were treading on the brink of a volcano. The bravest could not but be apprehensive at such a time ; the most courageous found it hard to live quietly on in their homes knowing that at any moment a pretext might be made for issuing a warrant against them. The country was stirred to its depths by the news of the plot ; panic reigned supreme. Yet in Algernon Sydney's study all was calm enough on that Tuesday morning, the 26th of June.

The calmness struck Betterton not a little when, ushered in by Ducasse, he found himself in the presence of the Republican. The room, somewhat meagrely furnished, seemed to bear the owner's history stamped upon it. It was lacking in the grace and neatness and comfort betokening womanly care. In the prevailing shabbiness there were, nevertheless, tokens that the owner, though poor, was of noble birth, for here and there a bit of cumbrous family plate was to be seen ; the Leicester arms were blazoned upon the brown morocco of more than one volume lying on the table, and relics of

Penhurst might have been noted among the ordinary furniture of a London house. Present, too, were signs that Sydney was one of the wanderers of the earth. An old trunk full of letters and papers stood open beside the writing-table; a pillow—friend of many a weary journey—lay hard by; while the literary tastes of the patriot were plainly evidenced by what for those days was a large collection of books.

Betterton had a moment in which to take in all these details, and to become conscious of an atmosphere of hard work which pervaded the room. Sydney was so absorbed in his writing that he had not noticed the opening of the door, and his servant crossed the room and mentioned the visitor's name a second time before he looked up. For one moment the actor caught the two faces full in the bright light which streamed in from the window. The face of the faithful valet bearing traces of care and harassing anxiety, the face of the patriot a little sterner than it was wont to be, but pervaded by that majestic calm which seems to be the panoply wherewith strong souls are indued in time of trouble. There flashed across Betterton's mind the description of a noble man in words which he had often spoken upon the stage—

‘E’en as just a man as e’er my conversation coped
Withal . . . That man who is not passion’s slave.’

It was not often that such an one was to be met with; yet here was a man, even in this vile age, noble of soul and pure of life.

The slight air of hauteur was evidently an inherited expression; it was not in accord either with Sydney's life or with his principles. Moreover, it was only noticeable when the face was in repose. He received the actor with perfect courtesy, which soon deepened into anxious interest and that strange rapid intimacy born of trouble. Hugo could not by any possibility have selected a better messenger than the great tragedian. He told his tale with a simple directness, with a vividness of description, with an absence of personal comment, but with a living sympathy which was irresistible. Sydney was deeply moved, nor did he even for a moment take a harsh view of Hugo's fall. The difficulty and the struggle he had long foreseen, the failure he had half feared, but he had a prophetic consciousness that such a nature as Hugo's would not for ever lie in slavery.

‘You will send him the word of counsel he craves?’ said the actor.

‘Nay, rather I will see him myself,’ said Sydney, quickly. ‘Would that I could lay hands on that caitiff brother of his, and give him a piece of my mind. ’Tis passing strange what diverse shoots spring from the same stem.’

And he smiled rather bitterly, thinking perhaps of the grave differences which had been the cause of so much strife and contention between him and both his brothers.

‘Pardon me,’ said Betterton, ‘but will not a visit from you be a source of mutual danger? To bring you into any risk would be small satisfaction to Mr. Wharncliffe.’

‘You are right,’ said Sydney, ‘I spoke hastily, forgetting that we live in an age which maketh truth pass for treason. Ay, I must not visit him, ’twould make his lot harder. Yet, poor lad, I would fain have spoken with him. Hugo is one of those who are over-pure for the age they live in, and, from Him of Nazareth downwards, life is hard to such.’

‘If there be aught that I can do in the way of bearing message or letter I am entirely at your disposal,’ said Betterton.

‘I am very sensible of your courtesy,’ said Sydney. ‘Perchance that were the best way, at least till the worst of this panic hath passed by. I will write to him at once, for indeed—*carpe diem*—who can tell but that I may be even as he ere the sun goes down.’

He smiled sadly, but with the calmness of one who has passed a lifetime in constant risks and perils.

‘You deem yourself indeed in danger, sir?’ asked Betterton, marvelling at the serenity with which such words had been spoken.

‘I have never known what it is to be out of danger, Mr. Betterton, for these many years,’ replied Sydney. ‘When I only looked over a balcony to see what passed at the election of the sheriffs, I was indicted for a riot. And I am well informed that had the Meal-Tub Sham succeeded, I should have been involved in it.’

‘Yet such a scheme would have sorted ill with your likings, sir.’

‘In truth you say well,’ said Sydney, with a bitter smile. ‘As I told his Majesty at Whitehall, nothing could be more repugnant to my feeling than a measure which must eventually unite the papists and the crown. But he that is unpopular must not look for justice in our land. For such an one there is naught but exile.’

‘Will you not once more be warned, and make good your escape?’ said the tragedian.

‘You echo the words that my faithful valet dins into my ears day and night,’ said Sydney. ‘But look you, Mr. Betterton, I am growing old, and I am weary of these endless precautions, and exile is hateful to me, and my country over dear. If I flee I shall but leave my heart behind me. That may answer at five-and-twenty, but at sixty it is not so well. Now, an you will permit me, I will pen a note to young Mr. Wharncliffe.’

He sat down at his writing-table, leaving the actor time for a further study of the room and its owner, this dauntless patriot, whose lot it had been to win the undying hatred of the court party, the fear of all half-hearted and timid men, and the fervent devoted love of a very few. Presently he drew forth his purse, examining its contents, with the air of one who is accustomed to find it lighter than might be wished. He had in truth known what it was to be ‘poor even to misery,’ and though at present able to live upon the small sum which his father had left him, and which after long legal disputes had at length been pronounced his, he would fain have sent much more substantial help to Hugo than was at all within his power.

‘You will then kindly be the bearer of this letter and purse,’ he said, turning to Betterton. ‘I am very grateful to you for your help. As to the purse, he must accept it as from a father. I see plainly enough that his brother’s aim will be to keep him in such sore discomfort that he shall at length succumb and own what he knows. Tell him he must use the money to defeat that unjust end, so will his independence not be wounded or his pride offended.’

Then, with a few more words of gratitude, a last message for Hugo, a finely turned compliment which, for all his ordinary bluntness of speech, proved the Republican to be a polished man of the world, Betterton found his mission ended, and the interview over.

After he had left the house, Sydney paced to and fro in his study for some time, wrapped in anxious thought. Hugo was very much upon his mind, for he felt a great responsibility for him, knowing well how large a share he had had in forming his character and his opinions. Betterton’s description of the prisoner returned to him again and again, and ever with a fresh pang of sorrow and regret. There was something indescribably mournful to him in the thought of that young life doomed to long imprisonment. After a while Ducasse entered and began to lay the table for the one-o’clock dinner, and

Sydney sat down and began to eat, more to please the faithful servant than because he had any appetite. Troubles were thickening day by day, and he was heavy of heart.

'Ah, sir,' said Ducasse, 'I could have made you a better omelette than this, an we were once more in France.'

'All things are best there in thy mind, from thy master down to eggs and poultry,' said Sydney, smiling. 'But I am growing old, Ducasse, and would fain end my days here, even though things right themselves but slowly in our foggy island.'

'Ah, sir,' said the valet, 'tis ever "the land, the land" you speak of. But of what use is the land, if monsieur's countrymen will but give him a six-foot strip in a cemetery, or perchance so much as will serve for a prison-cell. Ah, sir, think of yourself, and flee while yet there is time.'

'But look you, Joseph, in France I do but vegetate to no profit. Whereas here I may perchance serve my country, if free, in a hundred ways; if in prison, as an ensample to future ages; if on the scaffold, as one of the martyrs from whose blood shall spring one day our true Republic.'

'Ah, sir, it is of yourself that I think,' said the valet, sadly.

'Thou art but a Frenchman, after all, Joseph! Yet methinks, after these long years we have lived together, thou shouldst know me better,' said Sydney, smiling. 'Hark, there is a knock without. Go, see who calls. I have as little stomach for visitors as for my dinner this morning.'

Ducasse left the room, and Sydney let his knife and fork lie idle for a minute, leaning back in his chair with the air of one who is glad for once to be free from even friendly inspection. An intense quietness reigned in the room,—one of those timeless pauses which occur sometimes in life; for the moment his brain was at rest, his anxious thoughts were lulled; a breath of soft, warm June air floated in from the open window, and gave him a distinct feeling of pleasure; a bee went buzzing about the room, and finally settled upon his plate. Outside there were voices, but he did not heed them; outside were steps,—but what then? Ducasse, perhaps, had not been able to get rid of some importunate visitor. The door was thrown open, he glanced round. What did it all mean? The valet stood there with blanched face, and announced nobody,—yet the footsteps drew nearer, an officer entered, bowed slightly, advanced, and touched him on the shoulder.

All at once that strange hush was broken, the stillness, the calm, the timeless pause ended, and the room seemed in a tumult, above which there rang, sharply and gratingly, the words—

‘Algernon Sydney, I arrest thee in the king’s name on a charge of high treason.’

With a swift pang, he realised that the minute of intense stillness had been his last minute of freedom in this world, and involuntarily his eyes followed the bee, as, alarmed by the noise and the sudden intrusion of officers and men, it flew noisily round the room and out beyond through the open window.

A fresh knock without, and yet another unwelcome visitor. Sir Philip Lloyd entered, greeting the prisoner courteously enough.

‘I have an order, Mr. Sydney, to seize all papers found within your house,’ he said. ‘And I must therefore search the premises.’

Sydney bowed acquiescence.

‘Lay covers for two,’ he said, turning to Ducasse. ‘These gentlemen will dine with me—unless’—turning to Sir Philip Lloyd—‘you think it not meet to take salt with one arrested on such a charge?’

There was a sort of veiled irony in his tone, but the officers could not well refuse his hospitality, and the strange trio sat down to the table, and Ducasse waited on them, having much ado to keep his eyes clear enough to see the plates and dishes. Every one, save the Republican himself, seemed embarrassed. Throughout the meal he maintained a stately composure, talking with the officers as though they had been ordinary guests, and apparently doing his best to set them at their ease. Perhaps, however, their abashed manner was not altogether ungrateful to him, and he was quite human enough to enjoy the consciousness of being master of the situation.

Dinner over, Sir Philip Lloyd, nothing loth, set about the more congenial task of searching the house. What papers there were, however, were all in the study, and after a vain quest in the upper regions he returned, and began to ransack the drawers and cupboards of an oaken cabinet, while his men seized upon the papers lying on the writing-table, and stowed them away with the others in the open trunk and the pillow-beer.

This part of the proceedings tried Sydney’s patience considerably. His dark eyes flashed as he noted the seizure by

these strangers of all that was most private to him. Ducasse could see that his master had much ado to keep back a torrent of angry remonstrance. He held his peace, however, sitting somewhat rigidly in his high-backed chair at the dinner-table, and only following every movement with lynx eyes.

At length Sir Philip had made what selection of papers he deemed fit, a cord was placed round both the trunk and the pillow-beer, and Ducasse was despatched for wax and candle. The men dragged forward the heavy package.

‘Bring the light hither,’ said Sir Philip; and the valet, doing as he was bid, held the wax and the light close to his master.

‘What is this for?’ asked Sydney, with a shade of hauteur in his tone.

‘I desire that you put your seal upon these papers, Mr. Sydney,’ said Sir Philip. ‘They shall not be opened but in your presence.’

Sydney drew the signet-ring from his finger, but then hesitated. Had not something of this sort passed at Colonel Mansell’s rooms, when he was accused of complicity in the Meal-Tub Plot? And had not those who searched contrived to slip a treasonable paper in among the private documents?

‘You will affix your seal in this place,’ said Sir Philip, in a voice of authority, and indicating the knotted cord.

‘Pardon me, sir, I shall do nothing of the kind,’ said Sydney, with asperity. And, while every one stared at him, he put his ring on again with great calmness and deliberation.

Sir Philip shrugged his shoulders, and, looking but ill-pleased, put his own seal upon the cord.

‘As you please, Mr. Sydney,’ he said, coldly. ‘We did but consult your own convenience. A coach is in waiting, and we must make no further delay, since you are to be examined before the Privy Council.’

Sydney bowed.

‘My hat and cloak, Joseph.’ Then, as the valet returned, he spoke a few words of gratitude and affection to him in his native tongue, grasped his hand, bade him God-speed, and turned abruptly towards his captors. ‘Gentlemen, I am ready. Bear me whither you will.’

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MIDNIGHT ESCAPE.

I shall not want false witness to condemn me,
Nor store of treasons to augment my guilt;
The ancient proverb will be well effected:
A staff is quickly found to beat a dog.—*King Henry VI.*

‘JOYCE, my love, your father would speak with you,’ said Mrs. Wharncliffe, softly opening the door of the bed-room shared by Joyce and little Evelyn, and closing it as softly behind her.

The household had retired as usual, and it had been deemed prudent to tell none of the servants, save the old nurse, that Colonel Wharncliffe intended that night to make his escape. A secret shared among many is always in danger of being betrayed, and faithful devotion to a master does not always inspire prudence, or entirely crush the love of gossip.

It was past ten o’clock, but Joyce, knowing that she should be summoned ere long, had made no preparations for the night. She stood at the open casement, looking out into the twilight garden, her arms resting on the sill, and her face propped between both hands. Without, all was wonderfully still; not a breath of wind stirred the tall dark elms, no nightingale’s song broke the silence, no wakeful bird stirred in its nest, no sound of human life fell upon the ear. A heavy dew had fallen, there was a delicious balmy freshness in the air which made breathing itself a delight, and from far-distant fields was wafted the fragrance of the newly-cut hay. The calmness of Nature no longer irritated Joyce as it had done on the previous morning, when she had run out to sink the book in the moat. Since then she had lived through so much that all her thoughts and perceptions were changed; she had passed from childhood to womanhood, had learnt what it was both to love and to hate. Since then, moreover, she had caught a glimpse of the peace which remains unbroken, in spite of earthly tumult and strife, and the peaceful summer night seemed to her a type of the Infinite and Eternal.

She had been crying, but she dried her tears hastily on hearing her mother’s voice, and when she turned round a sudden smile of delight shone in her eyes, for she saw to her astonishment that the door had again been softly opened and her father himself stood there.

'I want a few words with you, little daughter,' he said, quietly, stooping to kiss her forehead as he spoke. 'We will come together to the south parlour; but first I will bid Evelyn farewell. No, do not rouse her, 'tis better she should sleep, poor little maid.'

Joyce had to walk to the window once more that she might furtively wipe her eyes, while her father and mother bent over the little sleeping child. When she looked round again, she saw her father kneel down for an instant beside Evelyn; he kissed her rosy cheek, her hair, her little uncovered arm, then he rose quietly, put his arm round his wife, and led the way through the dark and silent house, Joyce stealing after them with a full heart. Slowly and noiselessly they made their way down the broad oak staircase with its many turns, Joyce counting the familiar steps in each flight lest she should stumble and make a noise; then on through the ghostly-looking hall with its white flagstones and its dusky gallery, and its haunting recollections of the previous day. Joyce shuddered and crept closer to her mother, wondering if those terrible sounds would always torment her as she passed by. It was a relief to be in the light and warmth of the south parlour; it was a relief to be quite alone with her father, for Mrs. Wharncliffe left them, having many preparations to make.

For a minute Colonel Wharncliffe did not speak. He found that the words he intended to have spoken to Joyce would not come readily to his lips. How could he tell this child that she was much too young to know her own mind, when all the time she was raising, to his, eyes which were full of a strange new depth and tenderness? How could he say that love was not for her yet awhile, when love had already added womanly dignity to the child-like face? Instead, his thoughts went back to the far past.

'Thou art just like thy mother, little maid,' he said, stroking the soft, rounded cheek tenderly. 'And so thy kinsman hath told thee of his love, is it not so?'

'Ay, father.'

'And what did my daughter say when he told her?'

'I kissed him, father.'

Colonel Wharncliffe smiled in spite of himself.

'And didst own thy love?'

'Ay, father, I did say I loved him; it was the truth,' said Joyce, blushing vividly.

'Ah, my little maid,' said the father, drawing her closer to

him, 'dost realise that love brings pain with it? And thou givest away thy heart thus early, thou canst never again play light-hearted and free like thy sisters.'

'I do not want to be free, father, this is better,' said Joyce, shyly, yet with a certain sweet decision in her tone.

'God help you, poor child; I see but a sad time before you!' said the colonel, with a deep sigh. 'Say that I make my escape now and stay abroad till the danger is past and the country at rest again, that will avail naught to lessen Randolph's hatred. Nothing can free me from his enmity, nothing can save Hugo from his brother's wrath so long as he shields me by silence.'

'But Hugo never thought it would be otherwise, father,' said Joyce, with a little quiver in her voice. 'He has never expected aught besides; nor have I.'

'And thus my little maid hath half plighted herself to a life of sorrow and trouble.'

'Nay, but to Hugo,' she replied, with a thrill of eagerness in her voice which did not escape the father's notice. 'Not to sorrow, but to him, and afterwards let come what will.'

Very sadly he watched the sweet, eager face, with its light of love and devotion; he, with his fatherly desire to see her happy, free from care, and in perfect safety; he, with his manly longing to shield her from danger and suffering, could not understand that the long vista of pain and uncertainty did not in the least daunt her—seemed, on the contrary, rather to stimulate her love. For Joyce was a true woman, and the crown of a woman's love is the bearing of pain for and with the one she loves.

There was silence for a while. At length Colonel Wharncliffe spoke.

'Child,' he said, 'I cannot see before me; all is blank mist save this one step which I must take ere morn, to leave home and country. I can see no future for myself or for you, and do I try to think and scheme for you and the rest, my fears distract me. My life is in peril, and, if I were dead, I know not what might become of you children. I believe that Hugo would strive to make you a good and worthy husband. But, Joyce, the times are evil; nay, child, thy pure heart cannot see the perils that I know of. I am saying naught against thy lover, but the times are evil, and he hath been over-much at Whitehall.'

'Yet would he never take me to the court. Long ago he said that. He said after the duel it were no fit place for me.'

‘Hugo may not be able to help it,’ said the colonel. ‘A king’s commands are not lightly neglected. The world is an evil place, and my little white country-rose, for all her whiteness, might get sullied with the foul atmosphere of the court. Joyce,’—he took her hands in his and held them fast—‘Joyce, my child, if ever temptation should come to you, remember this, the love of your father and mother may shield you from much, and the love of your husband may shield you from more, but there is no invincible shield save the love of God Himself.’

Tears rushed to her eyes, and she trembled from head to foot.

‘Nay, sweet,’ he said, putting his arm round her, ‘I meant not to affright thee. Tremble not. That *is* invincible.’

After that no word passed between them for some time, but in the silence Joyce learnt many things, little dreaming that the father whose strong arm encircled her was learning too, and perchance a harder lesson.

‘Thou wilt take care of thy mother while I am away,’ he said, after a time. ‘She will need fresh help and comfort in many ways. Let that be thy charge, little Joyce. Do thou be her sunshine while I am gone.’

‘Evelyn would shine better,’ said Joyce, doubtfully.

‘And thou wouldst then let the clouds gather in peace,’ said the colonel, smiling. ‘Nay, I would fain leave thee as thy mother’s special helper; so will two birds be killed with one stone, as the proverb hath it, and my little daughter will not let herself pine away in a green and yellow melancholy.’

Joyce smiled faintly.

‘And you will send for us ere long,’ she said. ‘Why should not we be with you in Holland?’ Then, remembering that Holland was further from Newgate than Mondisfield, would fain have unsaid her words.

The father read it all in her face, and felt a sharp stab of pain. How absolutely in that brief time she had given her heart away! It hurt him a little, even while he recognised that it was both natural and inevitable.

‘I cannot tell how that may be,’ he said. ‘I cannot see any future; we must be content to leave it a blank.’

Poor Joyce! the words struck to her heart with a deathly chill. No future! and such a heart-breaking present! The thought of Hugo faded a little in her mind, and she remembered only that her father was going forth alone to brave the perils of the way, that she might, perhaps, never see him

again, and that but now she had grudged the thought of sharing his exile.

‘Take me with you, father,’ she sobbed, clinging to him like a frightened child. ‘Go not alone thus—take me with you.’

‘Bless thee for the thought, sweet one, but it may not be,’ he said, caressing her. Then, as his wife returned to the room, ‘Dear heart, I shall leave you with Joyce as my deputy; Joyce is to be her mother’s special child till my return. What! is all ready? Then let us be going. Delay doth but make things harder.’

Outside in the passage a lamp stood on an old wooden chest, and beside it the saddle-bags and the valise which the colonel was to take with him. Betty, Damaris, Frances, and Robina were in waiting, cloaked and hooded, and Betty came and tied on Joyce’s blue hood for her, and took the little sister’s cold hand in hers as they followed their father and mother down the drive, across the moat, and into the stable-yard.

Robina ran on quickly that she might speak to and quiet the old watch-dog; then, assured that Nettle would not betray them, followed her sisters into the stable, where, with Frances to hold the lantern, the other three girls saddled their father’s horse. Colonel Wharnccliffe, standing in the doorway with his wife, watched the scene with a sore heart; the dusky stable with its high roof lost in shadow, the patient steed, the lantern held up high by one of the dark-robed girls, and shedding its yellow light on the others as they deftly arranged saddle and bridle. He fancied that the brightest gleam of all fell upon Joyce, revealing the sweet face with over-bright eyes and tremulous lips; she was working away at straps and buckles with a nervous energy which strove to banish the thought of the parting—but the parting had to come.

Ere long the good steed was ready, and Robina led him carefully out into the yard beneath the tall elm-trees.

‘With Merlin’s help,’ said the colonel, stroking the glossy mane of his horse, ‘I ought to be at Harwich not long after sunrise, and at Harwich there will, I think, be small difficulty in getting a ship to Amsterdam. Farewell, dear heart. Keep up your courage, and be not troubled if you do not hear from me. Trust me to write by the first opportunity.’

After that no one spoke. In dead silence he embraced them, mounted his horse, and rode out into the night. Those who were left behind stood quite still—no one stirred, no one

cried ; they just waited there listening with painful intentness to the sound of the horse's hoofs, gradually growing fainter and more faint. At length they all knew that there was nothing more to wait for, the last sound had died away in the distance, and the summer wind stirring in the elm-trees seemed like a deep, sudden sigh as though Mondisfield knew that its master had gone forth into exile. Then one long, quivering, half-restrained sigh escaped the mother, and she was glad to feel a little, soft hand steal into hers. Were not her children left to her—doubly left ? She must live for them !

‘Come, my children !’ she said, quietly. ‘Close the stable-door, Damaris, and let us go back to bed. Nurse shall bring you all a sack-posset.’

So they went back to the deserted house, and Colonel Wharncliffe rode on towards Harwich, well knowing that many perils beset his path.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT THE NATIONAL THANKSGIVING.

With whom an upright zeal to right prevails,
More than the nature of a brother's love.—*King Henry VI.*

THE summer had passed, and the house in Norfolk Street, which had been closed for long months owing to the absence of the family, once more began to show signs of life. Shutters were thrown back, windows opened, and in due time the old family coach rolled up to the door, to the delight of three dirty little boys who left off playing with the mud in the gutter to watch the arrival of the grandees. Rupert, resplendent in sad-coloured cloth faced with green velvet, old Lady Merton, Sir William's sister, and lastly Mary, who had been by no means sorry to leave the country and return under Lady Merton's guardianship to London. Sir William and Lady Denham had gone to Bath, and were not to return till Sir William's gout had been cured.

Letters were rare in those days, and yet Mary had been filled with an uneasy wonder that the long summer months had brought no news of Hugo. The whole family had left

London soon after Randolph and Hugo had gone to Longbridge Hall, and no one had heard from either of the brothers since. True, Lady Merton's lonely old manor-house in Warwickshire was so remote that one never did expect any news there; but the vague rumours as to the Rye-House Plot, and the curious silence on Hugo's part, had troubled Mary not a little. More than once she pondered over that strange confession he had made to her in the preceding autumn, more than once she wondered how the case of conscience he had put to her could have anything to do with himself and Randolph.

Following her aunt up the broad stone steps and into the somewhat dingy passage beyond, she saw in an instant that upon the marble table outside the parlour door lay a letter directed in Hugo's clear but rather cramped handwriting,

*'To Rupert Denham, esquire,
'Att His House in Norfolk Street.'*

'Did Mr. Wharncliffe leave this to-day?' she asked, turning to old Thomas the butler, with whom she was a great favourite.

'Mr. Wharncliffe, mistress!' said the old man, raising his eyebrows. "'Twas not Mr. Wharncliffe who brought it. 'Twas one day last July, and one of the sour-faced Puritan ministers brought it to the door. I took him to be a Muggletonian, for he had the ways of them.'

'How?' asked Mary, forgetting her anxiety for a moment.

'Why, mistress, I did but keep him a few minutes on the step, and he had but knocked three times, and, when he taxed me with not minding my business better, I made bold to tell him he'd do well to mind his; whereupon he damned me to all eternity.'

Mary laughed.

'Perchance it was Muggleton himself. What said you to him, Thomas?'

'Why, mistress, I said that would be as the Lord pleased, and reminded him, as the proverb hath it—"Cusses come home to roost." I thought his letter might bide its time, knowing that Mr. Rupert would not care to pay for damnations on delivery, for I made sure it was from the minister himself.'

Mary longed to hear the contents of the letter, but was obliged to show Lady Merton to the guest-chamber, and then to take off her travelling dress and put on her white evening

gown, that she might not show any indiscreet desire for news of Hugo, awakening thereby her aunt's suspicion, and Rupert's love of teasing.

She thought she would tell Rupert of the Muggletonian's interview with the butler, and then, quite composedly and casually, ask how Hugo had come to employ so strange a messenger. But when she entered the parlour, and saw her cousin standing in the window still perusing the letter, something in his face changed all her plans. For Rupert, the merry, careless, light-hearted cousin, who was never grave for two minutes together, was reading the letter with an expression of such deep concern on his face as she had never before seen.

'What is it, Rupert?' she asked, breathlessly. 'What is the matter?'

He looked up, and she saw that there were tears in his eyes.

'Tis from Hugo,' he said, hoarsely. 'He has got into trouble over this cursed plot—he is in Newgate.'

'In Newgate!' she repeated, faintly. 'Hugo in Newgate!'

'Ay, of all folk under the sun!' cried Rupert, passionately. 'Or rather he was there months ago, may be yet alive perchance. Oh, why did that old fool forget to send me the letter?'

'He knew not it was from Hugo, 'twas brought thither by some Muggletonian who offended him. I suppose Thomas kept it back out of malice to the bearer.'

Rupert damned poor Thomas even more vehemently and explicitly than the Muggletonian had done, while Mary caught eagerly at the first sheet of the letter, and read Hugo's account of what had passed at Mondisfield; then, half blinded with tears, was obliged to let Rupert make out the rest, which he did not without difficulty, for Hugo had written in haste.

'Tidings have reached me this day,' he read, 'that Lord Russell is to be executed for the plot, Lord Howard of Escrick—said to be one of the cabal of six—having saved his own neck by swearing against his friend. And, Rupert, this is what they would fain have me do. There are but two ways out of this hell, and God preserve me from taking either of them. I must betray Colonel Wharncliffe, or I must promise to bear witness against Colonel Sydney.'

'Yesternight came to me one whom I take to be an attorney, and urged me much to come forward at Colonel Sydney's trial to prove his disaffection to the Government,

first seeking to entangle me by skilfully framed questions, and then dealing out both threats and promises of reward. Seeing that the rewards shall never be earned by me, I take it the threats will be put into execution, and that belike I shall be once more thrust into yet straiter confinement. Therefore come to me as soon as may be, for at present I can see you, being in that part of Newgate they call the castle. I have written boldly come, and yet perchance you will not deem it fitting to visit one who is implicated in such an affair. However, though Sir William deems himself a Tory, I know right well that he lets not affairs of state interfere with his friendships, else had he not been friends with Colonel Sydney, to whom as you know he introduced me at the first, even while warning me of his views. They tell me though that the whole country is stirred by this so-called plot, and I know not how far the atmosphere of Norfolk Street may be changed, only I have great hope that friendship will be over strong for love of party, and that you will come. An you love me, bring me what news there is of Colonel Sydney. Mr. Betterton saw him on the morning of his arrest, and brought me word of it. Since that I have heard naught. Nor has Jeremiah made any answer to a letter which Mr. Betterton's man was to bear to him, from which it seems to me most like that Randolph intercepted the said letter. From him I have no sign whatever, nor am like to have. Come to me soon, for I am heavy-hearted, and methinks you would make me smile even in jail. My duty to Sir William and Lady Denham. Tell Mary her counsel served me well in the sharpest strait of all. She will understand. I am in a cell here with two Nonconformists. Griffith, the one I like the least, is at this moment discoursing with the notorious Lodowick Muggleton, who, however, I must not abuse, since spite of all my errors he hath not as yet damned me, and will even out of charity bear this letter for me, and deliver it into your keeping. I have waited long in the hope of some such opportunity. The controversy seems drawing to an end, therefore must this letter do so also. For God's sake come to me, and if possible soon.

‘H. W.

‘Written at Newgate,
‘July 16, 1683.’

‘You will go to him at once?’ asked Mary, feeling for the first time that her womanhood put her at a terrible disadvantage.

‘Ay,’ he replied, ‘at once.’

‘Then take this with you;’ she put her purse into his hand. ‘You will not get in without fees to the turnkeys, and perchance he may be in need of money himself.’

Rupert did not refuse the purse, for to tell the truth his own was as usual inconveniently light. Mary’s money found its way to his pocket among love-letters, betting memoranda, and the tortoise-shell comb with which he kept his periwig in order in society.

It was a great relief to her to see him start off at once, and, having charged him with whatever messages she ventured to send, she stationed herself at the window to watch him out of sight, returning again and again to her post as soon as she deemed it possible for him to return.

The evening seemed interminable. The September twilight deepened into night, and Thomas brought in the lamp, and insisted on drawing the curtains; she could no longer keep her watch. Lady Merton, tired with her journey, sent down a message that she had gone to bed, and Mary sat idly in the great chair by the hearth, apparently watching old Thomas as he laid the table for supper, but in reality thinking of Rupert’s visit to Newgate, and wearying for his return. Thomas, who was of a talkative turn, thought he saw an opening for a little conversation.

‘Sad doings in London, mistress, since you went away to Warwickshire. Sad doings we’ve had.’

Mary looked up, returning from her reverie. It chafed her to feel how much more the old serving-man probably knew about the plot than she did, but she longed so much to know all that had happened that she swallowed her pride, and asked him a question.

‘We heard but little in the country,—only vague rumours about the plot, and then that Lord Russell had been executed. Have you heard aught of Colonel Sydney, Thomas?’

‘Ay, indeed, mistress. His man, Joseph, met me some four weeks or more ago, and I made bold to ask him after the colonel. You must know that on the second of August was a great fire in the Inner Temple, over against the great gate at Whitefriars. Three staircases was burnt, and Sir Thomas Robinson, of the Common Pleas, he leaped out of window, and was picked up dead as any stone. Well, mistress, I went next day to see the spot, and there among the crowd I espied Colonel Sydney’s French valet.’

‘And what said he of his master?’

‘Why, he said he was very straitly confined in the Tower, and that they dealt most severely by him, so that his health had given way. They would let him see no friends, they had seized all his goods and chattels, nor would they permit him to have so much as a change of linen. However, Ducasse did tell me that his master meant to petition the king for at least so much as that.’

Mary was silent for a minute. Her thoughts had flown back to an evening less than a year before, when in that very room Sydney had supped with them, and had discoursed of the better education of women, and how she had laughingly offered him some of the red-deer pie of her own making.

Once more the whole scene rose before her, the empty table was again surrounded by the cheerful party, the Republican colonel leant back in one of the chairs propounding his theories of life; Hugo sat opposite to him, listening with reverential attention; Rupert made comical signs of disagreement; Sir William and Lady Denham listened with mild amusement and well-bred patience to schemes which did not meet with their approval. Ah! how safe and happy they had all been then! And now one of the guests lay in the Tower and the other in Newgate, both of them in the gravest danger, both of them enduring untold hardships. She could almost have smiled, had she not been so wrathfully indignant, at the thought of the proud Republican obliged to petition the king—and such a king—for permission to have a clean shirt.

Thomas, who had left the room during her silence, now returned, bearing a small box in his hand.

‘Ah, mistress,’ he said, looking cautiously round to see that no one else was near, ‘you may have heard little in the country, but we, here in London, have perchance heard too much. I respects my master, and I respects Sir William’s views and opinions, but though folk may say an old serving-man should think with his master, I don’t hold with such sayings. Mark me, mistress, the nation won’t stand such doings as there have been much longer. Lord Russell he said that those who attacked the liberties of England would have to wade through his blood. Well, God rest his soul! he is dead and gone, but his blood was not shed in vain.’

He opened the box and took out a handkerchief, one corner of which bore a dark red stain. Mary looked at it and shuddered.

‘Ay, mistress,’ continued the old serving-man, ‘I ever deemed myself a loyal subject, but now my eyes are opened,

and I say that he who made such an one die, when all the world knew he was innocent, is a tyrant, and false to his country. I stood in Lincoln's Inn Fields, mistress, the day of Lord Russell's execution, and I saw him drive up with Dr. Burnet, brave and composed as could be, and, as I think, singing to himself in an undertone. I saw him butchered, mistress, and I will never forget it. I dipped this handkerchief in his blood, as a token to hand down to my children's children; and, right or wrong, every one of us is turned against his Majesty from that day.'

'I feel with you,' said Mary, in a low voice. 'But, Thomas, be cautious in what you say, for after all this is my uncle's house, and we are bound to respect his feelings.'

Truth to tell, Mary had long ago ceased to believe in the 'divine right of kings,' but she had never confessed it to any one, well knowing that girls of twenty were not supposed to think at all upon such matters.

She asked for further details of Lord Russell's trial and death, of which Thomas gave her so harrowing a description that she could not restrain her tears. Scarcely had the old butler withdrawn from the room when steps sounded in the street without, and Rupert opened the front door. Mary hurried forward to meet him, an eager question on her lips.

'Tis all of no use,' said her cousin, wrathfully; 'they will not let me see him.'

'You have been to Newgate?' said Mary.

'Ay, and saw the governor. He admitted that Hugo was there, that he was ill, that he was in the darkest hole in Newgate, and that he had lain there since July, being far more obstinate than they had reckoned for. I tried to bribe him to let me see him, but 'twas of no avail.

"Not if you offered me all the gold in the Indies," he said. "The court has an eye to this prisoner; he is no common case, to be dealt with as I list."

"The court will defeat its own ends by letting him pine to death in a dungeon," said I.

"Men don't pine to death so easily as you think for," said the governor, laughing. "And you may think yourself lucky for being spared a visit to a pestilent den, where likely enough the prisoner would refuse to speak to you, for he hath taken to silence of late. The more men would have him to talk, the more he persists in holding his tongue."

'I asked what his illness was, whereupon the governor rang a bell, and in came a jailer, worse-looking than himself, who,

in presence of his master, gave naught but surly answers and rough jests.'

'Could you not have seen him alone?' said Mary.

'Ay. Afterwards, having taken leave of the governor, I managed, by the aid of one of your golden guineas, to secure this fellow Scroop. He says the damp of the dungeon and the bad food have made him ill; he couldn't say how, not being a leech himself. I gave him a message for Hugo, but he would not promise to bear it him. Rough and coarse as he was, though, he is better than the governor, though he looks worse, and he might be bribed.'

The cousins talked together far into the night, planning how to reach Hugo.

The next morning all London was ringing with the sound of church bells, for it was the 9th of September, the day appointed for the National Thanksgiving for the king's escape from the Rye-House plot. Some commotion was caused in one of the churches, for a note was handed in to the unsuspecting reader and delivered by him before he had fairly gathered the drift of the verse.¹ The astonished congregation, who had come to return thanks for his Majesty's deliverance, listened in amazement to the following lines—

'You hypocrites, forbear your pranks,
To murder men and then give thanks :
Forbear your tricks, pursue no further,
For God accepts no thanks for murder.'

In the meantime old Thomas quietly made his way home again, and Mary Denham was not sorry to avail herself of the large green fan which ladies were in the habit of taking with them to church to screen their devotions.

One other person in the church also changed colour from very different reasons. Randolph's face grew a shade paler, his bitter mouth twitched nervously once or twice. Murder was an ugly word, and there was such a thing as aiding and abetting murder. Then again there was Hugo. They had brought him word that he was ill, and he had rejoiced, thinking that there was the greater chance of gaining his point and dragging from his lips the desired information. But if Hugo were to die?

He shuddered at that thought. And the thought haunted him persistently all through the service. He had vowed that he would not see his brother before his trial, but while the

¹ This actually happened. See Luttrell's *Journal*.

old clergyman delivered his lengthy discourse Randolph was struggling with an almost unconquerable longing that had suddenly seized him. A strong desire to see Hugo once more took possession of him. How was he to justify such a change of purpose to himself? How was he to permit such a weakness? In truth the better part of his nature was striving to make itself felt, and to escape from the thralldom of the lower. To do Randolph justice, he had been sufficiently miserable during these summer months, and this day his misery reached its climax. Something, he knew not what, had touched into life the faint love which yet lingered in his heart for Hugo. If he could but justify this desire to see him with his plans and schemes! And, after all, it would defeat these said schemes were Hugo to die in jail; and was he prudent to trust entirely to the word of an ignorant jailer? Hugo was too valuable to be left in such a way. It would be in every way prudent to visit him. Having thus reconciled himself and made his excuses to his lower nature, he lost no time in making his way to Newgate, where no difficulty was made about admitting him. He asked a question or two of Scroop as the jailer led him along the dreary passages.

‘Was the prisoner better? What had his illness been?’ and so forth.

‘You’ll judge for yourself, sir,’ said Scroop, grimly. ‘I never set up for being a leech.’

‘But is he yet ill?’ asked the elder brother, with more anxiety in his voice than he cared to betray.

‘Oh, ay, he’s ill yet awhile, if sobeit he’s alive,’ said Scroop, carelessly. ‘Have a care how you walk, sir, these steps is slippery with the damp.’

‘What! is it down here?’ exclaimed Randolph, shuddering. ‘’Tis enough to kill him, in good sooth. Why did you put him in such a vile hole?’

‘I did but obey the governor’s orders, sir, and belike you know from whom he received them.’ Scroop looked sharply back at his companion as he gave utterance to these words. He was pleased to see Randolph wince. ‘Belike you’ll not care to remain long, sir; I will but lock you in with the prisoner for a half-hour. This way, sir, and mind your head.’

So saying, he fitted one of his keys into a low door, unlocked it, drew back the bolts, and bade the visitor walk in.

CHAPTER XXV.

RANDOLPH'S REMORSE.

Yea, bless'd is he in life and death
That fears not death, nor loves this life;
That sets his will, his wit beneath,
And hath continual peace in strife.
That doth in spite of all debate
Possess his soul in patience;
And pray, in love, for all that hate;
And hate but what doth give offence.

JOHN DAVIES (1612).

RANDOLPH made a step or two forward, cautiously groping his way, for at first he could scarcely discern anything in the dim light. He would fain have kept the jailer with him, for it gave him an unpleasant feeling to be locked into this dismal dungeon, where all was silent as the grave. Supposing Hugo were actually dead? What if his worst fears were realised?

It was strange that he made no sign, for his eyes must have grown accustomed to the twilight. The floor was rough and uneven, in many places covered with water nearly an inch deep. Randolph splashed straight into it, and swore half-a-dozen oaths as the chill and muddy stream found its way into his shoes. But soon things grew clear to him, and once more he could see distinctly all that there was to see in the bare prison-cell. Hugo, wrapped in a dark-green cloak, lay on the stony bed in the corner; his white face and hands, gleaming out of the dimness, looked so deathly that Randolph with an exclamation of dismay hurried across the muddy floor, and bent down close to him. At that moment his eyes opened, gazed in astonishment for an instant at the face bent over him, then lit up with a gleam of momentary rapture.

'Is it you?' he cried. 'Ah, I have had such hateful dreams.'

'I came here to see how you fared,' said Randolph, more gently than he was in the habit of speaking.

'Here?' repeated Hugo, his face clouding over. 'Where is it? Where are we?' He half raised himself with a bewildered, troubled look and glanced around. It was after all the dream that had been fair and the reality that was hateful. There was the grim, iron-studded door, and the little grating, and the bare walls, and the wet floor gleaming in the sickly light.

He sank back again, and covered his face with his hands. There was silence in the cell. Randolph was relieved when he looked up once more.

'I must have slept right sound,' he said, in a voice which betrayed repressed suffering. 'I did not hear you come in.'

'You have little else to do in Newgate, I should think.'

'No; and here it is not often possible to sleep at night because of the rats; they are quieter by day.'

He got up as he spoke, and crossed the cell languidly, returning with a rough wooden seat which he offered to his brother.

Then he sat down on the bed with his back against the wall, and his head resting on his hand.

'Your head is aching?' asked Randolph.

'Yes,' he said, quietly, 'it always aches now.'

'They should have told me how ill you were.'

'Scroop said he did tell you. Scroop is very good to me.'

'What does he do for you?'

Randolph glanced round as though to discover traces of the jailer's attention.

'He brings the bread and water himself instead of sending one of the prisoners; and he is never uncivil now. And on the bad days he will bring me a double share of water.'

'There is no other prisoner with you, then?'

'No, save for the first day and night, when poor Baillie was here. Baillie of Jerviswood, a Scotchman, near of kin to Dr. Burnet.'

'I have heard of him,' said Randolph. 'He, too, was implicated in the plot. What has come to him? Is he executed?'

'No,' said Hugo. 'Worse than that. They bore him back to Scotland because here they may not legally torture him for evidence. There he may have both rack and boot.'

'And since he went you have been alone?'

'Yes, save when Scroop comes in, or Mr. Ambrose Philips.'

'Who is he?'

'One who hath an order from one of the secretaries to come here as oft as he will and try to drag evidence from me.'

'Ah, lad,' said Randolph, with a sigh, 'when are you going to yield to him? What heart have I for joining in a National Thanksgiving while you languish here?'

Hugo turned his languid eyes upon him for a minute, but he seemed too weak and depressed to care very much for anything.

'Is there a thanksgiving?' he asked. 'I heard St. Sepulchre's bells ring. They tolled for Lord Russell the day I came in here, and now they ring for the king's triumph. What day is it? I have lost count of time.'

'Tis the ninth of September.'

'Then I have but been in this cell nigh upon two months. Yet it seems like two years.' Then, half dreamily, 'How merry the bells sound! I thought it must be Gunpowder Plot Day. Only September! Only September! My God! keep me from thinking of the whole!'

'The whole of what?' asked Randolph, startled by the sudden tone of agony.

Hugo seemed to return to the world again.

'Of life,' he said. 'It is thinking of the whole that drives men wild.'

Randolph knew not what to say. The interview had not been at all what he had expected. Hugo did not seem overpowered with delight at seeing him, nor much struck by his condescension in coming; he was so ill and weak, too, that the elder brother's manhood kept him from saying what was harsh and bitter, and tender words did not come naturally to his lips. So once more he fell back into an uncomfortable silence.

All at once voices were heard outside, and the key grated in the lock. An extraordinary change came over Hugo. His pale face flushed as though he had made some sudden effort; he sprang up, crossed the cell hurriedly, and took up a position with his back to the light, leaning against the wall below the grating. Meanwhile Scroop had opened the door, and there entered a bland-looking man, who glanced swiftly at Randolph.

'Ah, the jailer told me I should find you here. I have merely come to have my little conversation with your brother. I will not interrupt you long.'

Randolph perceived that this must be Mr. Philips. The little man turned to Hugo, who merely bowed to him, and then once more leant back against the wall with folded arms.

'Well, Mr. Wharnccliffe, I hope I see you better. What do you think of our National Thanksgiving, eh? What, still playing the mute? I hoped you had tired of that game. But in truth I have some news for you this morning. I have been to the Tower, and have seen your friend Sydney.'

Hugo's face relaxed a little, and a very eager look dawned in his eyes.

'How is he?' he asked anxiously.

'Nay,' said Philips, 'why should I tell you what you would fain know, when you will not tell me aught that I desire? Promise to give evidence against the colonel, and I'll not only tell you about him, but I'll bear you to him this very day.'

Hugo vouchsafed no answer to this. Philips continued, more warmly,

'You *know* that your fate is in your own hands. 'Tis in your own power to make yourself what you will, for you know this rogue Sydney is a traitor, and you may make yourself what you will, if you will discover what you know of his designs against the Government.'

'You are mistaken,' said Hugo, sternly. 'I could say naught that could touch a hair of Colonel Sydney's head. I have told you so a hundred times.'

'If I might advise the king,' said Philips, wrathfully, 'I would bid him have all you damned Whig rogues hanged. The colonel sent a message to you, moreover,' he continued, tantalizingly; 'but it is impossible for me to deliver it while you still keep up this stubborn resistance.'

And thus in much the same strain the interview went on, Philips alternately coaxing and threatening, Hugo loftily silent, his face stern, his lips firmly set, his eyes, which just before had been so languid, full of strength and resistance.¹

At length the questioner's patience was exhausted, and he took his leave.

'You may think to baffle me, Mr. Wharncliffe,' he said, angrily, 'and for a time you may succeed, but in the end you will be forced to succumb. Mark my words, there are worse things in our power than you wot of. I have known folk not allowed to sleep by day or by night for weeks that evidence might be gained. I shall see you again on the morrow.'

Hugo bowed, but made no reply, and Philips, rapping loudly on the door, was released by Scroop, who had remained outside. When the door had been closed and locked, Hugo, with an air of great exhaustion, recrossed the cell, and once more lay down on the bed.

'That is over,' he muttered to himself, in a tone of relief.

'You dread Mr. Philips, then?' said Randolph.

¹ Ambrose Philips was really employed to extort evidence against Sydney from one Aaron Smith, who was kept for some time a prisoner. See Ewald's *Life of Sydney*. Meadley says that prisons were ransacked, and menaces and persuasions alternately employed among the prisoners, in order to get a second witness to prove Sydney's treason, but none could be found.

Hugo started.

'I had forgot you were there,' he said. 'No, I do not dread the man, but I dread myself. Oh! must you go?' as Randolph rose and began to readjust his cloak. 'Will you not stay yet a little while? There is so much I would ask you,—and who knows if we shall meet again?'

There was such entreaty in his voice that Randolph sat down once more.

'We shall meet again at your trial,' he said, coldly. 'Have you not remembered that I shall have to bear witness against you.'

'Yes,' said Hugo. 'But perchance that may never come off. There is a deliverer on whom Ambrose Philips does not reckon. Every second day the fever returns to me, and with that a chance of death. But I waste the time. Tell me of Jeremiah—of the Denhams.'

Randolph had not the heart to refuse his request.

'You don't know what it is to have you to talk to,' he said, gratefully; 'the days are like eternity.'

'They do not permit books?'

'No; I have naught to pass the time save an old bit of charcoal, with which I can draw, and a rat which I have tamed. Were it not for those, I should have gone mad.'

'By your own confession, you see, you are altogether miserable. Why, then, be such a fool as to stay?'

'No,' said Hugo, quietly, 'I am not wholly miserable. Can you not understand that 'tis sweet to feel you hold the safety of two men in your keeping? Did I betray them, then indeed I should be, and deserve to be, right miserable. What! one o'clock by St. Sepulchre's?'

'Ay; is that your dinner-hour?' asked Randolph.

Hugo smiled faintly.

'One does not dine in Newgate,' he said. 'But this is the hour when my fever returns. Perchance it were, after all, best that you should go.'

Randolph half hesitated. Truth to tell, he wanted his own dinner, and yet a vague uneasiness prompted him to stay with his brother. He looked down at him intently, and that look made him decide to stay. For, true to Hugo's prediction, the paroxysm of ague had already begun. He had turned ghastly pale, his lips were blue, his face haggard and drawn. Randolph thought him dying.

'There is naught to fear,' he said, speaking as well as he could with chattering teeth. 'It is ever like this.'

But Randolph did fear. For soon Hugo was shivering from head to foot, and a strange blue shade had overspread his face.

'Do they not even allow straw in this wretched hole?' said Randolph, wrathfully.

'No,' he replied; 'for fear of fire.'

To speak of fear of fire in that miserable, damp dungeon seemed a mockery. With an oath, Randolph tore off both his cloak and doublet and wrapped them round the shivering form.

'Is that better?' he asked.

But there was no reply. Hugo seemed to be drifting away into unconsciousness. Was it the unconsciousness of death?

'He shall not die!' said Randolph to himself. 'He shall not!' And, with a pang, Hugo's own words returned to him—'Tis sweet to feel you hold the safety of others in your keeping.'

Sweet! It was hideous beyond description—it was intolerable! But his brother should not die; death should not deliver him. His life was too precious to be lost. Not that Randolph would permit himself weakly to be turned from his purpose by the sight of a little pain. Hugo should remain in Newgate till he had been forced into giving evidence, but he should not stay another day even in that pestilent dungeon. He rapped loudly at the door to attract Scroop's attention; but the jailer was out of hearing, and, to tell the truth, had forgotten him. He knocked, he swore, he stormed, all to no purpose.

'Must you go?' said Hugo, reviving a little.

'No, but I want to send that varlet to fetch blankets for you. A plague on his foolish pate. Why doth he not hear?'

'Never mind; a dozen blankets would not warm me. Moreover, I am well used to it.'

Randolph stood watching him in miserable helplessness. At length, prompted by common-sense, he sat down on the stony pillow and lifted Hugo so that his head and shoulders rested against him instead of upon the stones.

'Ah! that is better,' he said, and spite of the pain and misery, a look of relief—almost of happiness—stole over his worn face.

They did not speak much, but for hours Randolph held him in his strong arms and did what he could for him, Hugo responding with a sort of dog-like gratitude with which he had always accepted kindness from his guardian. At length, when

the shivering fits had given place to raging fever and thirst, when the third and final stage of the attack was over and had left the patient worn out and drowsy, Randolph once more resumed his doublet and hat, and this time succeeded in attracting Scroop's notice.

'Had as much as you like of dungeon life, sir?' asked the jailer.

'Ay, and the prisoner hath had too much,' said Randolph. Then bending down over his brother, 'It shall be your last night in this hole, trust me.'

Hastily embracing him he turned away, and was conducted by Scroop to the upper regions.

'Ah, my Ratto,' said Hugo, as his little brown friend appeared the moment the cell was quiet once more, 'you and your family may dance all night an you will, I'll not grumble; for to-morrow, Ratto, I shall breathe freely once more, to-morrow I shall have better company than you.'

But when the next evening he thought things over, he came to the conclusion that he had wronged Ratto.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CLEVELAND HOUSE.

Oh, most delicate fiend!
Who is't can read a woman?—*Cymbeline*.

AFTER the first moment of intense relief on breathing the fresh air in Newgate Street, Randolph fell into a train of very unpleasant thought. The struggle first awakened in his mind by that curious rhyme in the church returned now with tenfold force. He could not get his will, at any rate at present; but neither could he make up his mind to resign his will and accept defeat at the hands of his younger brother. Without accepting defeat, he could not save Hugo from the hard fate that awaited him. In this strait what was he to do? Not for long years had so sharp a struggle raged within him, not for long years had the good so nearly triumphed.

He had walked gloomily along Fleet Street, chafed and annoyed by the loyal crowd who were preparing the evening

illuminations. Somehow this thanksgiving grated on him, seemed to his guilty conscience but a hideous mockery. Again and again he heard Hugo's voice dreamily repeating, 'How merry the bells sound!' and he shuddered as he remembered the dreary prison-cell.

By this time he had reached the entrance to the Temple, and for a moment he stood irresolute, vaguely listening to the bells of St. Clement's, vaguely watching the men and boys as they heaped faggots upon a bonfire hard by. Should he go home to encounter Jeremiah's stern face and unspoken reproaches, or should he divert his thoughts from the unpleasant subject altogether and go to Cleveland House? He looked past the bonfire in the direction of the Strand, he looked to the left towards the dark and quiet Temple. Which was it to be? His whole future life hung upon the choice, little as he was aware of the fact. An insignificant turning-point, a decision which seemed scarce worth pausing over, but, as is so often the case, one upon which hung great issues.

The chambers in King's Bench Walk rose vividly before him—the empty chair, the untouched books, the silence, the sad-faced serving-man. Why, it would all reproach him, all re-echo the inward voice of his self-reproach. He could not bear it. He must seek diversion, dancing, drink, flattery, vice, anything, he cared not what, so that it would take him out of his true self. He turned into the 'Grecian,' made a hasty meal, then threading his way through the crowded streets, sought refuge from his tormenting thoughts in the costly and magnificent house—a palace in all but the name—which had been built for the Duchess of Cleveland. This evening it was quieter than usual, for there were festivities at Whitehall, and the duchess would have been there herself had she not been detained by a slight indisposition. Randolph was ushered through stately corridors and gorgeous but tenantless rooms to a little boudoir which he knew right well. It was a charming little room; the most beautiful tapestry hung upon the walls, the softest skin rugs covered the floor, a cheerful wood fire threw its mellow light upon one of Grinling Gibbons' most delicately carved chimney-pieces, and wax candles disposed here and there beneath rose-coloured shades diffused a soft glow on all around. At one end of the room an open doorway, half veiled by silken draperies of gold and crimson, betrayed a vision of white-robed attendants with lutes, harps, and guitars, and as Randolph entered a girl's voice was filling the room with the exquisite air and the abominable words of one of the

songs of the day. Beside the wood fire in the boudoir sat the Duchess of Cleveland, her shapely head with its rich brown curls resting in languid comfort among crimson velvet cushions, her tiny feet stretched out to the blaze upon a French tabouret, her long, loose dress of creamy Indian silk falling in rich folds on the tiger-skin rug, and her swan-like neck partly veiled by a soft, white fur tippet which she had drawn around her.

‘Ah, is it you, Randolph?’ she said, smiling and motioning him to a seat beside her. ‘You have come to cheer me in my desolation. I took cold upon the river last night, and so dare not share in the Whitehall festival.’

So carefully and delicately did her attendants dispose the rouge and powder, that it was almost impossible to believe the duchess to be a middle-aged woman. She had all the charms of youth and all the *savoir-faire* and acute observation of a woman of great experience. Her pencilled eyebrows, her large, lustrous dark eyes, her finely-chiselled nose with its arched nostrils, and her full, red lips, bore an expression of calm, haughty consciousness of power. Looking far younger than Randolph, she was in truth some years his senior, and, while seeming only to charm and amuse him, she ruled over him despotically. In his inmost heart he was aware that he was her slave, but this was a slavery which he did not deem bondage. It was the fashion. What then! he must follow with the multitude, and there was no shame connected with such conquest. But to be conquered by principles, to own the sovereignty of conscience, to sacrifice present gain to some shadowy notion of right, this was a ‘bondage’ which he could not endure, which, in fact, he had not the courage to face. He had come to Cleveland House to be soothed out of the rugged vision of hateful duty, of humiliating reparation which had dawned upon him. He had come because his love of Hugo had made him miserable, and because his love of self made him hate the misery, and because, in good truth, vice was so easy and natural, and the first steps in virtue so perplexing and hard.

‘I cannot so much as smell a flower,’ said the duchess, laughing and taking from her bosom a cluster of red roses. ‘There, you happy mortal, exempt from colds and coughs! bear them for me. Oh, crimini! how he crushes my poor gift in his manly grasp! Thou art out of temper to-night, *mon ami*.’

‘And therefore I came to you,’ he said, looking at her bright, laughing eyes.

‘That is ever the fate of women,’ said the duchess, pouting and re-arranging her dress. She had taper fingers, but her wrists were large and ugly. ‘When the men are worth talking to they stay away. When they are in the dumps they come and expect to be amused, for all the world like peevish, nursery imps. I dare swear it is that brother of yours who troubles your peace. Ah! I thought as much.’

‘I have seen him this day. He is ill, well-nigh dying.’

‘That must not be allowed,’ said the duchess, decidedly. ‘What, have they been starving him?’

‘They have done their worst to him, and he will reveal naught. Misery seems to have no power to shake him from his purpose.’

‘He was ever obstinate as a mule, our little court saint,’ said the duchess. ‘But since misery will not move him, try yet another plan. Let him have the best private cell which Newgate will afford, and I will send a sweet little temptress to nurse him into health and to play the part of a Delilah.’

Randolph did not speak, there was a curious look of doubt and hesitation in his face.

‘What! art turning Puritan?’ said the duchess, with a mocking laugh.

‘A very idle question, fair lady,’ he replied, with a slightly sarcastic smile, ‘while I sit here in this palace of delight. However, you know well that in some sense Hugo may be accounted one.’

‘That was all very well when he was a pretty, pale-faced boy. But now he is a man, and ought to pay his *devoirs* to beauty and love. He must be brought down from his lofty heights, very kindly and tenderly as you will, but he must be brought down, else will you never gain from him what you would. Why should you object? ’Twill be a kindness to send him what will best cheer his solitude. And as to my little Blanchette, she will be the queen of his heart ere another day is over. No man can resist Blanchette. I will call her.’

The duchess touched a little silver bell which stood beside her, and immediately one of the white-robed attendants appeared at the doorway, with one hand holding back the silken curtain which hung in soft sheeny folds on each side of her. She was a beautiful creature, tall, graceful, with snowy neck and arms, masses of loose flaxen hair, and eyes which were constantly veiling themselves beneath dark lashes as though modestly conscious of their own power.

'What was the name of your song, Blanchette?' asked the duchess.

'It was a love song, by my Lord Rochester,' said the girl, in a high, clear voice, in which there were pleasant modulations.

'It suits you well, go sing another like it. After that you may close the door.'

The girl curtsied and withdrew, and ere long another passionate song thrilled through both ante-room and boudoir. Then the door was softly closed, and there was silence.

'Well, shall we try her?' said the duchess.

'Perchance it might be as well,' said Randolph.

'Still doubtful,' said the duchess, laughing. 'Why, *mon ami*, St. Antony himself couldn't have resisted her. I see a triumphant end to all your trouble.'

Randolph did not speak. His eye had fallen upon a mirror, which hung upon the opposite wall. In it he could see the reflection of the luxurious room, of the magical lights, of the beautiful duchess with her pearl earrings and necklace, of himself lying on the tiger-skin rug at her feet.

Another picture rose before him. A dank prison wall, a gleam of chill light from a narrow grating, a man standing beneath it with folded arms, set lips, stern brow, bearing threats and taunts in silence, rejecting bribes with scorn.

And the duchess spoke lightly and cheerfully of a 'triumphant end.'

Well, it would be worth while to triumph over that other! —that other whose picture contrasted so unpleasantly with the reflection in the mirror. He would like to triumph over him, he would like to falsify that picture, he would like to drag him down, he hated him for his resistance. He should not die, he should not triumph, he should be dragged down, and be a little lower than himself.

'You have cheered me,' he said, turning to the duchess with a smile in his dark eyes, in which there lurked already the anticipation of victory. 'An you will indeed spare her, Blanchette shall try her skill.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TRIAL.

This man is great with little state,
 Lord of the world epitomised :
 Who with staid front out-faceth fate :
 And, being empty, is sufficed—
 Or is sufficed with little, since (at least)
 He makes his conscience a perpetual feast.

JOHN DAVIES (1612).

SCROOP had never been deficient in that which should be a marked characteristic in a jailer,—he had never lacked a habit of observation. At the same time, he had never observed any prisoner with such acuteness as he observed Hugo Wharncliffe. He had watched men in the mass, he had watched them as cases, but he had never before watched them with deep interest as individuals. On the night of Hugo's arrival in June, Scroop had for the first time in his life wondered. Through those dreary August days, watching his prisoner in the dungeon as he fought against fever, depression, and misery, Scroop wondered still, and grew pitiful. Through the six weeks of fierce, unmitigated temptation that followed the elder brother's visit, Scroop wondered more and more, and grew reverential. At length there came a day when Blanchette failed to appear at Newgate, and thereupon the jailer was summoned into the governor's private room.

'Mr. Wharncliffe hath recovered from his illness?'

'Ay, sir. He seems well enough.'

'Good. Then remove him this day to the Common Debtors' Ward. 'Tis well he should try a change of air.'

Scroop dutifully grinned in recognition of his superior's jest, and at once proceeded to obey his orders.

The room to which Hugo had been removed was dry, well-aired, and by no means uncomfortable; he probably owed his life to the change. As Scroop opened the door, the prisoner looked up apprehensively; when he perceived that the jailer was alone, he could not repress a look of relief.

The six weeks' temptation had left very visible marks upon his face. It was no longer possible to forget that he was a man—the words 'boy' and 'lad,' which had hitherto most naturally come to the lips in speaking of him, were no longer

appropriate. The dreamy look in his eyes had given place to a quiet vigilance. The sweet-tempered mouth had become sterner and straighter—youth had passed for ever.

‘I am to be removed, Scroop? That is well,’ he said, with a sigh of relief.

‘Your honour does not ask whither,’ said the jailer.

‘I care not,’ said Hugo. ‘So it be from here, and from——’ He broke off and relapsed into silence.

Scroop felt sorry for his charge. And yet, since he had held his own through such numberless temptations, why should he not hold his own still, even in the degraded atmosphere of the common jail?

Truth to tell, the change was at first welcome to Hugo. It was a relief to see fresh faces, even though they were reckless and often wicked faces; it was a relief to hear once more the babel of many voices, and it needed all his new strength to resist the craving which came over him to join the majority in drowning wretchedness in drink, and whiling away the weary days by reckless play. He had been in this new ward about a fortnight, when one day he was ordered into the governor’s presence.

‘You had best be preparing your defence, Mr. Wharnccliffe,’ said the governor. ‘For a Habeas Corpus hath been brought unto me, and I am ordered to bring you before the Court of King’s Bench on the morrow.’

‘To-morrow!’ exclaimed Hugo, hardly knowing whether he were relieved at the news or not. ‘Am I not to be allowed counsel?’

‘No, sir,’ replied the governor.

‘I suppose I can have a copy of the indictment?’ said Hugo, frowning slightly, for he was greatly perplexed to know what possible defence he could make.

‘Oh, yes, you can have that,’ said the governor, coolly. ‘And much may it help you.’

Hugo read it in silence. Then he looked up boldly; not that he felt any confidence whatever, but that he would not let the governor see his hopelessness.

‘I desire to subpoena two witnesses,’ he said. ‘Sir William Denham of Norfolk Street, also Mr. Rupert Denham.’

‘It shall be done,’ said the governor. ‘They have both of them been here full oft desiring to see you. ’Twill at any rate look well to have such a Tory name as Denham witnessing in your behalf.’

Hugo made no answer. He knew that the only witnesses

who could avail him aught were at Mondisfield Hall, knew that there could be but one end to the trial.

He slept little that night, looking forward with a curious mixture of pain and pleasure to the coming day. It would be bitter beyond all thought to see Randolph arraigned against him, yet it would be inexpressibly delightful to breathe fresh air once more, to see the world again, to see and perhaps speak with his old friends.

Early in the morning he was taken in a hackney coach to Westminster ; the change of scene was less enjoyable than he had expected, he felt dazed confused, and terribly unequal to the work which lay before him. Moreover, the sun was not shining, as he had hoped. It was a gloomy November morning, and he could only catch a glimpse of the Abbey, looming drearily out of the river fog.

He tried to fancy himself once more a Westminster boy, tried to think this was all some hideous dream ;—and indeed it scarcely felt real to him when the coach drew up at the entrance to Westminster Hall, and he was marshalled through the staring crowd, to find himself, not in his wonted place taking notes of the case among a group of careless Templars, but as a prisoner at the bar. He glanced hastily around, noting many familiar faces, the sight of which disturbed him so much that he was glad to sit down and busy himself with some papers which he had brought, with a few notes as to his defence. He felt that Randolph was present, but could not bear to look at him ; he knew that the Lord Chief Justice was darkly regarding him, but, having once bowed to him, he would not cast one glance in his direction, for he feared Jeffreys, and was afraid of showing his fear, and ashamed of the weakness which yet he had never been able to overcome. There was not much time for thought ; all was proceeded with very rapidly, the names of the jury hurried through, the indictment read, and the case opened by the counsel for the prosecution. Hugo tried hard to listen, tried hard to think, but the speech reached him in very disjointed fashion. He was vaguely conscious that Mr. Ingram, in a clear, ringing, attractive voice, was saying that he would prove the prisoner to be a member of the Green Ribbon Club, a personal friend of Algernon Sydney, one who protected conventiclers, a betrayer of trust, a hater of monarchy, and a concealer of treason of the deepest dye.

The speech was an effective one. At the close the witnesses for the Crown were called, and the first name which rang

through the court was that of Randolph Wharncliffe. The prisoner seemed to come to himself as the familiar name fell upon his ear. He drew himself together, sat more erect, looked up calmly for the first time, unmindful of the myriad eyes fixed upon him,—mindful only of the face which he had not seen for so many weeks. He watched his brother keenly as the oath was administered to him. Did he think of that scene in the gallery at Mondisfield, when another oath had been administered on the nun's cross? If so, the thought left no trace on his stern brow; he looked hard, austere, as though he hated the work before him, but meant to go through it unscrupulously. Then, skilfully aided by questions from Mr. Ingram, Randolph unfolded the whole story of Hugo's two visits to Mondisfield, omitting only, or adroitly veiling, all that could make his own share in the work appear dishonourable—omitting, of course, the scene with the pistol.

Indignation at this incomplete version began to stir in Hugo's heart, and a pang of wrathful pleasure possessed him when he remembered that it was in his power to cross-examine the witness. He would punish him—would drag from his lips the disgraceful confession of that midnight scene—would show forth before all men the villainy that had led him astray. Revenge at least was in his power, and revenge he would have. His eyes flashed so strangely that the spectators wondered what had come to the prisoner, who at first had been so passive and downcast.

And yet?—and yet? Was it for him to think of vengeance? Was he—the greatly forgiven—to harbour wrathful feelings? Was he to treat his brother as though there were no tie between them—no deathless bond of kinship? Well, Randolph had broken the bonds,—had treated him shamefully. Why should he not follow his example? Why should he not have his turn now?

'If you have any questions to put to the witness,' bawled Jeffreys, 'put them at once.'

Hugo stood up. Burning words were on his lips,—words which would have shamed Randolph before the whole court,—questions to which he could but have given one reply. Nothing could have altered the inevitable result of the trial, but this would have brought to light Randolph's villainy, and proved the strongest excuse for himself; but at that moment another trial scene flashed before his mind—the vision of another prisoner—and with that a loathing of his selfish anger

and petty revenge, and withal a recollection of what love and brotherhood meant.

‘Of my brother I ask no question,’ he said, quietly; and resumed his seat amid murmurs of surprise.

Only Randolph fully understood all that was involved in the prisoner’s silence. A sudden flush overspread his dark face; he left the witness-box hastily, and passed through the crowd with a face so troubled and downcast that many of the observant people remarked that it must be hard on an elder brother to bear such family disgrace; they felt sorry for Mr. Wharncliffe.

John Pettit, landlord of the ‘White Horse,’ Mondisfield, next deposed to the prisoner’s presence at his inn on the fifth of October of the previous year, and corroborated Randolph’s assertion that Hugo had accompanied his brother in the evening. Hugo put two or three questions to him, but chiefly for the pleasure of speaking to one who knew Joyce.

Sir Peregrine Blake and other witnesses followed, and there was much discussion upon the papers found in Colonel Wharncliffe’s room. Then Hugo was told to enter upon his defence. Sir William and Rupert listened now anxiously, and were in truth astonished at the prisoner’s intrepid bearing. It was the first time he had ever spoken in public, and to speak amid the perpetual interruptions of Jeffreys was no easy matter. However, he went steadily on, knowing that the defence was useless, yet with simple directness putting forward the sole plea which was left to him. He was charged with misprision of treason, but it had yet to be proved that treasonable matter was contained in the particular book of manuscripts which he had concealed, it had yet to be proved that treasonable words had been spoken at the meeting at Mondisfield. They had but the witness of one man to these facts; he submitted that the treason was only inferred, and not proven.

Then he called upon Sir William Denham to bear witness to his character; and Sir William, having described him as the last man on earth to meddle with plots or politics, and one of the king’s most loyal subjects, made way for his son, who confirmed his testimony. It was a lame defence, and a poor show of witnesses, yet better than nothing.

‘What! no more witnesses?’ shouted Jeffreys, in mocking tones.

‘No, my lord,’ said Hugo, composedly.

‘Then address yourself to the jury, and don’t waste time,’ said the Lord Chief Justice. Nothing irritated him so much

as quiet composure. 'I can tell you we've weightier matters in hand this day than listening to the vain prattle of such lads as you. Speak on, and keep to the point.'

'Gentlemen,' said Hugo, his mellow voice contrasting oddly with Jeffreys' hoarse roar, 'perchance you will not deem five minutes over-long for one who is pleading against lifelong imprisonment. I have been denied the aid of counsel, denied any legal aid whatever, and am therefore at great disadvantage. However, I trust you will hold with the poet—

"For lawyers and their pleading,
They esteem it not a straw;
They think that honest meaning
Is of itself a law."

It hath been shown to you that I have ever been his Majesty's loyal subject; I heard no word of the plot till the whole was made public; nor have you any right to construe a refusal to give evidence against a kinsman into a mute acknowledgment that the said kinsman is guilty of treason. You may infer what you please—I cannot help that—but I maintain, gentlemen—and I think you will agree with me—that the treason is not proven, and that you cannot legally find me guilty of misprision, seeing that the whole hangeth upon the word of but one witness. My life is in your hands. I ask you, apart from fear or favour, to give me the verdict of honest citizens, and to say that this case is not proven.'

Had the jury gone away with those unmistakably honest tones ringing in their ears, there might have been some faint hope for Hugo, but there followed Mr. Ingram's powerful speech on behalf of the Crown, and then Jeffreys' summing-up and charge to the jury. Accustomed as he was to the brutality of the Lord Chief Justice, Hugo was yet amazed at the audacious wickedness of the man, and his utter disregard of all reason and right. The jury retired, but speedily returned; after such a charge, they could but give one answer. Jeffreys, well pleased, stood up to deliver sentence, and there was a gleam of savage amusement in his eye, for he knew that he had a surprise in store for the prisoner—this obstinate fellow, out of whom, nevertheless, he still hoped to drag the desired evidence.

'Hugo Wharncliffe,'—the voice sought now to be only judicial and severe,—'you are found guilty of the crime of misprision of treason; I therefore sentence you to be imprisoned during the remainder of your natural life, or during his Majesty's pleasure; and, in consideration of your extreme

youth, I pronounce that the punishment of forfeiture of goods and chattels, or of profits arising upon lands belonging unto you, shall be commuted, and in lieu thereof you shall be whipped by the common hangman from Newgate to Tyburn.'

A murmur of surprise and astonishment ran through the court, the barristers clustered together in little groups and whispered questions as to the legality of Jeffreys' sentence. Was there any precedent for such a proceeding? Could such punishment be legally substituted? Sir William Denham shed tears, Rupert swore under his breath, Randolph flushed slightly, but never took his eyes off his brother's face. Beyond a doubt, Hugo was startled; as the terrible doom was spoken, he looked up hastily, looked up incredulously. Surely his ears must have deceived him? Surely that punishment could never be his?

'My lord,' he said, the colour surging up in his pale face, 'I have not been guilty of a misdemeanour, and methinks your sentence is illegal.'

They were bold words to speak to such an one as the Lord Chief Justice. Every one looked in amaze at the prisoner, who had dared to make such a remonstrance.

Jeffreys grew purple with wrath.

'What, sirrah!' he exclaimed, in thundering tones, 'are you such an adept in legal matters that you can instruct me? Say another word, and you shall stand in the pillory into the bargain! Jailer! remove the prisoner at once.'

Hugo bowed to his judge, and turned unresistingly towards the jailer, who led him from the court. He felt stunned, stupefied; afterwards he recollected sorrowfully that he had not even looked at the Denhams or at Randolph, had not made the most of that brief glimpse of his old haunts. Unresistingly, silently, he was led down Westminster Hall, past the familiar book-stalls, through the staring crowd—the crowd which certainly was far greater than usual. So much greater that his attention was at length aroused; he came to himself, looked round, and wondered. His own case would certainly have failed to attract any special notice. For what, then, were these spectators waiting? and why did they all stand with their faces turned to the great door which he was just now approaching? His eyes followed theirs, he looked forth into the murky November atmosphere, and saw that Palace-Yard was full of soldiers.

'What is all this for?' he asked of his jailer.

'They say Colonel Sydney is to be brought up for trial,' said the man indifferently.

Hugo's heart beat wildly. Sydney's prophecy was, then, coming true! 'We shall meet again in London.' Ay, indeed! In London, but in what a manner! The one coming forth from trial, knowing his fearful doom, the other going to receive the same mockery of justice at the hands of the same unrighteous judge.

But yet he should see his friend and teacher once more, and long months of suffering and confinement had made Hugo thankful for small mercies. He should see him once again, should meet him as he had foretold at Penshurst. And now they had almost reached the great doorway, and the tramp of the soldiers overpowered the confused babel of voices in the hall. Still Hugo's jailer led him on, hoping to get out of the building before the others entered it. But at the very threshold his aim was frustrated. Gripping his prisoner fast with one hand, he bade him wait till the incoming stream had passed by and had made motion more possible. Hugo, forgetting his doom, forgetting all but the thought of seeing Sydney, breathed a silent thanksgiving, and waited in eager expectation. Soldiers in bright uniforms passed by him, sweeping back the spectators ruthlessly, but taking no heed of the jailer and prisoner in the doorway,—his very misery was, in this instance, a gain. No one feared a rescue from him, no one cared for that one insignificant prisoner, with his handcuffs and his attendant jailer.

He just stood against the old stone mouldings of the doorway, and the strong guard of soldiers passed on, and at length, looking out into Palace-Yard, Hugo could discern in the midst of them the dark, plumed hat which must belong to his friend. Slowly, steadily the procession moved forward. Sydney drew nearer. Hugo could see his face now; he looked older; there were deep lines in his forehead and around his mouth, his cheeks were hollow, and although he carried his head high, and bore his usual aspect of stern dignity, Hugo could see that he must have suffered much from the prison life, for all his air of health and strength was gone, and he evidently walked with an effort. Would he see him? Would he look up? That was now the question which occupied all Hugo's thoughts. That terrible business-like tramp of soldiers' feet went on in maddening monotony. His friend drew nearer and nearer. Would he not give one glance in his direction?

Ah, yes! at length his earnest gaze attracted the Republican's notice. He looked up just before reaching the threshold, and their eyes met. Surprise, pleasure, regret, sympathy,

encouragement, all blended together in that one long look, which was all that the master could give his pupil.

‘God bless you, dear lad,’ he said, and looked him through and through, looked at him long and lingeringly, as those look who are being borne away to some foreign land and bid a last farewell to the friends who stay behind.

And Hugo’s grey eyes lit up with eager love, and the memory of his doom passed from him altogether as he repeated the words of Sydney’s motto, *Sanctus amor patriæ dat animum*.

Sydney heard the words, turned back once more, and smiled, a smile which Hugo could always recall, a smile which lit up the stern, rugged face, and made it beautiful as a true and noble passion has power to do, be the features what they may.

Then the line of soldiers closed in around the prisoner, and soon all that Hugo could see was the broad-brimmed felt hat and the brown periwig, the one dark spot amid the bright uniforms and flashing bayonets.

‘Now, sir,’ said the jailer, giving his arm a little shake to arouse him.

He glanced back once more,—caught a last vision of the old hall, with its dark vaulted roof, its crowd of spectators, its bright line of infantry, and its patriot prisoner, then turned and followed his guide into the murky November air without.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TEMPTATION.

Virtue may be assailed, but never hurt ;
 Surprised by unjust force, but not enthralled ;
 Yea, even that which mischief meant most harm
 Shall in the happy tidal prove most glory :
 But evil on itself shall back recoil.—MILTON.

Hugo’s trial had taken place on the 7th of November, and the time passed on, and though each day he asked Scroop when his sentence was to be put into execution, the jailer could never give him any definite reply. The uncertainty was terrible. He hoped much that now the trial was over the Denhams

would have been allowed to visit him, but though they had applied for leave, Scroop told him that they had been peremptorily refused. He was deserted of all men, save Mr. Ambrose Philips, who still visited him with great assiduity and patience, dilating much on the horrors of the punishment which awaited him, and offering free pardon, if only he would appear at Colonel Sydney's trial.

It appeared that on the 7th of November Sydney had been brought up for trial, and, after a stormy scene with the Lord Chief Justice, had been given a fortnight in which to prepare his defence, being denied, however, the aid of counsel, or even a copy of the indictment. This was all Hugo could learn, and he passed a hard fortnight. Early on the morning of the 20th he was summoned from his crowded ward; was it to go out to his fate, he wondered? but Scroop reassured him and spoke cheering words to him as they walked along the stone corridors.

'Keep up your heart, sir,' he said, with rough kindness. 'There is a chance for you yet.'

He then took his charge into a private cell, bidding him wash and change his clothes, and to make all speed about it.

Hugo, greatly wondering, did as he was told, and then followed the jailer to the main entrance, where three officers in plain clothes awaited them. Scroop opened the heavy iron-studded door, and fresh air and golden sunshine found their way into the gloomy jail and to the prisoner, who looked forth with eager eyes. He was hurried into a hackney coach which stood without, the officers got in with him, the door was shut, and he was driven off, whither he could only conjecture, since the blinds were down, and the officers would give no information whatever. Was it perhaps the day of Sydney's trial? Was he to be taken to Westminster Hall and induced to give evidence? If so, he resolved to take refuge in silence, he would not risk being confused by a perplexing string of questions. At length the coach stopped, he was hurried out of it and taken so speedily into an open doorway, that he had no time to make out what the place was, only he felt sure it was not Westminster. He was taken into a small wainscoted room, where a pleasant-looking, middle-aged man sat at a table writing; the officers withdrew and left them alone together.

'You will wonder who I am,' said the stranger, motioning him to sit down. 'I am Dr. Pratt, and I have been

commanded to examine into the state of your health, Mr. Wharncliffe.'

Hugo, who had struggled through his illness without any medical aid, submitted to a thorough examination, marvelling a little what was the meaning of it all. After a while it began to dawn upon him.

'Do you know that you are very much out of health?' said the doctor.

Hugo replied that he was quite aware of the fact.

'I fear there is one thing, however, of which you are not aware,' said the doctor, kindly. 'They tell me you are to-morrow to be whipped from Newgate to Tyburn. Now, in your present state of health such a punishment as that will cost you your life.'

'To-morrow,' repeated Hugo. 'Will it be to-morrow?'

The doctor looked at him curiously and with some compassion.

'Ay, so they tell me. But you do not hear what is of far more importance,—I assure you that such a punishment will cost you your life.'

'Yes, sir, I hear plainly enough,' said Hugo, thoughtfully. 'And, did life mean to you merely eternal Newgate, methinks you might look on death with other eyes.'

The doctor rose hastily and took two or three turns up and down the room before again speaking.

'Well,' he said at length, 'I am sorry for you, sir; I have done what they bade me do and have given you fair warning. 'Tis not for me to argue with you, others will do that.'

'Ay,' said Hugo, smiling a little, 'there is no lack of arguers. To listen to them is the employment of my life, and I thank you, sir, for sparing your breath and my patience.'

He relapsed into silence and deep thought. It was to be to-morrow, then, to-morrow!

The doctor regarded him closely for a minute; then with a sigh and shake of the head, opened the door and summoned the officers.

In silence they led the prisoner up a winding staircase, dark and narrow, which opened into a large and handsomely-furnished bed-room; here an usher met them, and led them on through corridors and empty rooms to the door of an apartment which somehow had to Hugo a familiar air. When it was opened the first thing which met his gaze was the *Noli me tangere* of Hans Holbein. He knew then that he was at Whitehall, and had been admitted by the private staircase, of

which he had heard rumours in the old times. He breathed a little faster as the usher went on before to announce them, then returning bade them come in. How strangely different it was from that evening long ago, when he had last entered this room in company with the little Duchess of Grafton. Involuntarily he sighed. Life had looked so very bright to him that evening. Coming to himself, he noticed that his companions were bowing low. He too bowed mechanically, and then looking up saw that the king was sitting at a table amusing himself by dissecting a little Dutch clock. He looked much older than when Hugo had last seen him, his face had lost much of its easy good-nature, he seemed gloomy and ill, while there was an unhealthy yellowish tinge in the whites of his eyes, and the lines and wrinkles in his face were very apparent.

‘I would speak with the prisoner alone,’ he said, turning to the chief officer. ‘Hath he been searched?’

The officer, with many apologies, replied in the negative.

‘Then let it be done,’ said Charles, querulously. ‘I marvel that in these days of treachery you bring a man from jail into my presence with so little precaution.’

The officer was about to lead Hugo from the room, when something in the prisoner’s face made the king interfere.

‘Nay, hold,’ he exclaimed. ‘We do but waste time, for now I think of it, this gentleman speaks the truth even to his liege lord. Have you aught concealed about you, Mr. Wharncliffe?’

Hugo opened his doublet, and produced a book, a tiny parcel, and a letter. The officer handed them to the king at his request, and then withdrew, leaving Charles alone with the prisoner. The book was Joyce’s *St. John*; the king merely glanced at it, and to Hugo’s relief, did not read the words written within. The parcel he unfolded; it contained a lady’s handkerchief embroidered in one corner with a J. At sight of this he smiled broadly, and looked once more the good-natured monarch of former times.

‘Ah! Mr. Wharncliffe,’ he said with a laugh. “‘One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.’” Kings or prisoners, we are after all alike in this particular.’

Hugo made no reply, and managed to school his face into courteous passiveness. Inwardly he raged, and only longed to snatch Joyce’s handkerchief from the king’s hands.

Charles took up the letter. It was the one which Sydney had sent by Betterton, and the king’s face grew dark as he

read it. The perusal took him some time, and Hugo fell into a reverie. At another time the thought of a private interview with the king might have awed him a little, but kings sank into insignificance before the news which had just been given him. He was to suffer to-morrow—and to die. He had much to settle, much to think over, and but a few hours left him.

The king folded the letter, and looked across at the silent figure which stood opposite to him, taking in with his keen eyes every smallest detail—the clothes which seemed to hang loosely upon their wearer, the quiet pensive face, with its suggestion of latent power, the strange calmness of the expression both of the mouth and eyes.

It was a bitter November day; Hugo involuntarily glanced towards the fire, and the glance seemed to make an opening for an interview which, to tell the truth, was sufficiently embarrassing to the king.

‘You look cold,’ he said, not unkindly. ‘Do they not give you fires in Newgate?’

‘Ay, my liege,’ said Hugo, smiling a little. ‘But there are many of us, and the ward is large, therefore it is not often that one can come nigh it.’

Never was there a less formal monarch than Charles; he motioned to the prisoner to sit down beside the hearth, and, leaving the table with the Dutch clock, he took a seat opposite him.

‘You have seen the leech, they tell me,’ he resumed after a moment’s pause. ‘What did he tell you?’

‘That I have probably but one more day in this world, sire?’ said Hugo, warming his hands at the fire.

‘Pon my soul, you seem to take it quietly enow,’ said the king. ‘Hath life no charms for one of your years?’

‘It hath many charms, sire, while I sit here,’ said Hugo, glancing round the beautiful room. ‘But I have lived through months of misery, and in Newgate I find no charms, but hunger and thirst, cold and sickness, vile companions and days of wretchedness.’

The king looked at him with uneasy compassion.

‘Can you imagine what made me command your presence this day?’ he asked.

‘Hitherto there hath been but one end sought in every interview, my liege, therefore I presume that your Majesty also hath the same in view.’

‘Ay, they told me you were stubborn as a mule; therefore,’

—and Charles smiled the peculiarly charming Stuart smile which had won so many hearts—‘therefore I sent for you. Come, Mr. Wharnccliffe, I believe you to be my loyal subject in your heart of hearts; you have but been led astray by evil men. I will overlook all the past, so only you consent to give evidence against Colonel Sydney. You have withstood Ambrose Philips, but I think you will scarcely withstand your sovereign when he asks you to do this as a personal favour. Believe me, it is but to few men that I could bring myself to make such a request.’

Again that fascinating smile, that winning tone of voice. Hugo’s heart beat fast, and the colour rose in his pale face.

‘Sire, I crave your pardon,’ he said, ‘but it is impossible—altogether impossible.’

‘You do not realise the difference it will make,’ said the king, quietly. ‘Consent, and you are free this instant. Consent, and I will give you a post about my person; and you shall have all that heart can wish. On the other hand, persevere in your refusal, and on the morrow you will suffer the most horrible and degrading of punishments, intolerable to one of your birth and breeding, and in this worthless, miserable way you will end your life. Say, do you not shrink from this?’

‘Yes,’ said Hugo;—nothing but that monosyllable,—no courteous title, no comment on the king’s speech, but yet in the one word a whole world of expression,—all the concentrated pain of those weary months, all the terrible apprehension, all the shrinking sensitiveness, all the loathing of the shame and publicity, all the natural clinging to life and liberty.

The king was touched; there was a painful silence.

‘Do you not see,’ he said, after a time, in his persuasive voice—‘do you not see how great is the stake you hold? Here is a chance offered you of changing the history of your country.’

Hugo looked up, the moment’s agony was passed, there was a light in his sad eyes.

‘But already that chance is mine, my liege. What if I do suffer to-morrow—what if I die? It is naught, for Colonel Sydney will be free.’

‘You are greatly mistaken,’ said Charles, his face darkening. ‘Colonel Sydney must die. Naught can alter that. The decree has gone forth, and it must be.’

‘But there is but my Lord Howard to witness against him,’

said Hugo. 'He cannot be executed, my liege, on the word of one witness,—and such a witness!'

'I know of no cannots in such a case,' said the king, coldly. 'There were plenty of cannots at the trial of our Blessed Martyr, yet in the end his death was compassed.'

'Ah! my liege, have you forgotten that 'twas Colonel Sydney who nobly refused to have aught to do with that sentence? Is this your reward for his honesty? Will you be less merciful to him, less generous? Nay, 'tis no question of generosity, but of simple justice, for he is not guilty. Oh! my liege, my liege, you cannot think that such a man as Sydney would stoop to such meanness,—would attack any man at a disadvantage! You cannot think that such a one would league himself with mere desperadoes like the Rye-House men!'

'I did not send for you to plead for Colonel Sydney,' said the king gloomily. 'I tell you he must die; say no more.'

There was that in his tone which conveyed a terrible conviction to Hugo's heart. He could not conceal his anguish. For all these weary months had been rendered bearable to him by the thought that he was suffering for his friend, buying his freedom. In fact, it was well known that the evidence against Sydney was so extremely shaky that almost everybody had deemed it probable that he would merely lie in the Tower for a time and then would be released without trial, or, if brought to trial, would certainly escape with a fine or imprisonment. Now for the first time the truth broke upon Hugo; he could do nothing for his friend. Regardless of the king's presence, he buried his face in his hands.

'I have spent my strength in vain!' he groaned.

'That is precisely what we have been urging upon you all these months, Mr. Wharnccliffe,' said the king, more cordially. 'You have indeed spent your strength in vain; do not into the bargain throw away your life; give me your word that instead of going forth to meet that insufferable punishment to-morrow, you will repair to Westminster to Colonel Sydney's trial, and you are free from this moment. Do you not see what a great opportunity we give you? In any case Colonel Sydney will die, but, by the help of your evidence, you may, as we said before, alter the history of this land, you may do us the greatest possible service. Say, lad, will you refuse me?'

'Your Majesty asks me to bear false witness against a friend,' said Hugo. 'How can I help but refuse?'

'Could you save him by silence, that were another matter,'

said Charles. 'But you cannot do so, his fate is fixed. Therefore, for your own sake and for ours also, I beg you to think of what liberty means. Methinks you are like to break the heart of this fair Juliet, or whatever her name be, who owns this handkerchief, an you choose death and dishonour.'

Hugo's eyes filled with tears as a vision of Joyce rose before him. The king made haste to follow up his advantage.

'Only do this, Mr. Wharncliffe, and you shall wed this fair damsel and live in peace and honour. I give you my word that nothing shall come betwixt you.'

'My liege,' said Hugo, recovering himself, 'did I do this, I should not be fit to have her. I respectfully refuse your Majesty's request.'

With a frown and a shrug of the shoulders, Charles crossed the room, and, opening the door which led into the adjoining library, spoke a few words to some one within. Hugo did not hear them, he was lost in thoughts of Joyce. He came to himself as the king returned, and the words fell upon his ears, 'Stubborn as a mule, and if you read this letter you may perchance gather the reason.'

Thereupon the king took up Sydney's letter and held it out to some one who followed him. Hugo glanced round, and with an irrepressible exclamation started to his feet, for the king had spoken to Randolph.

The brothers greeted each other silently. Then Randolph read the letter with darkening brow.

'Tis this traitor who has led him astray!' he said at the close, and he would have torn the letter in pieces had not Hugo darted forward.

'Hold!' he cried passionately. 'The letter is mine, you shall not tear it.' Randolph paused, and Hugo turned to the king. 'My liege, I showed it at your request; but it is mine, he has no right to it. Bid him restore it, sire, I beg you.'

'Ay, give it back, Randolph,' said the king, carelessly. 'There, take back all of your treasures, I have no wish to deprive you of them, and you had best take leave of your brother, for you are not like to see him again, unless he succeeds better than we have done in making you hearken to reason.'

So saying, Charles picked up a spaniel which had curled itself round in his vacant chair, and strolled into the library, fondling the dog's long ears.

'I have one more chance to offer you,' said Randolph, sternly. 'You have ungraciously refused the king's request,

but you may yet save yourself by witnessing against Colonel Wharncliffe.'

Hugo made a gesture of entreaty.

'For God's sake, begin not that again. Have I not said I will never do it? Have I not sworn it?'

'Yet all things are changed since your trial,' said Randolph, much more gently. 'Hugo, an you love me, save me from this misery, let me not have this disgrace thrust on to me! Save me from the pain and ignominy of having a brother of mine whipped from Newgate to Tyburn like a common criminal.'

'That lay in your power, but scarce in mine,' said Hugo, hoarsely.

It was far harder to refuse Randolph than to refuse the king.

'It is in your power to be free to-morrow, by only promising to reveal what you know,' said Randolph; and there was such real anxiety, such real solicitude in his face, that Hugo was obliged to take a turn up and down the room before he could find voice to answer him.

'I will reveal nothing,' he said at length. 'I ought to have known nothing.'

There was something in his manner which finally convinced Randolph of the hopelessness of his errand. His regret and anxiety and baffled hope turned to hot anger.

'You are a fool! a traitor!' he thundered. 'Your blood be on your own head. Think not to lay the blame on me, an they whip you into a ghost. You are a traitor to your king, to your country, and to me! I disown you!'

With a gesture as if this were more than he could bear, Hugo turned away; Randolph, with blazing eyes, laid a strong hand on his shoulder, and forced him to turn round.

'For the last time,' he said, speaking through his teeth, in a voice of repressed passion, 'Will you shield this traitor no longer? Will you reveal what you know of Colonel Wharncliffe? Will you confess what was in the papers?'

The last time they had touched each other it had been in the dungeon. Some recollection of this came to both. Randolph would not suffer his face to move a muscle, though he was conscious of a sharp stab of pain, but Hugo's lips began to quiver.

'I will not,—I cannot!' he said in a choked voice. 'Death itself, ay, and even your displeasure, were better than such—villainy!'

'To the death you deserve, then,' said Randolph, removing his hand. 'And may the devil take your soul!'

He turned to go, but before he had reached the door Hugo had sprung forward in an agony, and clutched at his arm.

‘Randolph! Randolph!’ he cried; and there was such anguish in his voice that, in the adjacent room, the king began to hum a love-song to himself to drown the sound. ‘Go not like that! Go not with such words! I shall never see you again! For God’s sake, bid me farewell!’

‘Unhand me!’ said Randolph, roughly. Then, as Hugo still retained his hold, he shook himself free with a volley of oaths. ‘Have I not disowned you, and cursed you? What more would you have? Go to your fate! You are naught to me!’

He strode out of the room, and there was silence, until in a few minutes the king strolled back again, still fondling the little spaniel. Hugo had thrown himself into a chair, with his arms stretched across the table, and his face hidden. The king could hear his hard breathing; he watched him for a moment in silence.

‘I have tried to save you,’ he said at length, regretfully. ‘’Tis your own doing—you will not be saved.’

Hugo hastily raised himself. His face was white and haggard; but the king’s words seemed to awaken in his mind a fresh train of thought, and for the time to divert him from the recollection of Randolph’s cruelty.

‘You would save me the unworthy, my liege,’ he exclaimed. ‘You would fain show mercy to me—then why not to one who deserves infinitely more at your hands. I deemed Colonel Sydney’s fate rested with me, but I was cruelly deceived. His fate rests with your Majesty. You tell me that I may change the course of history, but oh, sire! think how great a change might be effected by your Majesty. Think how by one just and generous deed your Majesty might endear yourself to future generations. My God! to think what power rests with one man!’

There was something so heartfelt in the last ejaculation that Charles was not offended by it, even though he felt reproached by the prisoner’s searching look of mingled wonder and despair. That moment did for Hugo what all Sydney’s teaching had failed to do,—it made him a true Republican. He glanced round the beautiful room, with its tapestried walls, its fine pictures, its curious clocks and pendules, its silken curtains and rich carvings; he looked long at the hard-featured man in black velvet doublet and brown periwig, who still idly toyed with his little dog. He looked at the sensual eyes, which

glanced now at him, now at the spaniel; he looked at the voluptuous lips, about which there lurked now a faint smile, for to Charles there was always something laughable in earnestness.

'I see you deem the power ill-placed,' said the king, good-humouredly. 'Well, Mr. Wharncliffe, I need detain you no longer, for we do but waste time, and you will not serve my purpose.'

With that he held out his hand graciously, intending to show a very unusual mark of confidence and condescension in permitting the prisoner to kiss it. But to his surprise Hugo drew back.

'Pardon me, sire,' he said, bowing, and colouring crimson with the effort of uttering such words. 'There is blood upon it.'

The king swore a deep oath, and his dark face turned almost purple for a minute. But recovering his self-possession he gave a careless laugh.

'You are a true disciple of Algernon Sydney,' he said, marvelling a little that one of so sensitive a temperament should have adopted such principles, or have been capable of showing himself so disagreeably consistent with them. 'I pardon your bluntness, however, for though you are no courtier, Mr. Wharncliffe, I believe you to be an honest man misled by those who should have known better. Remember that I tried to save you.'

With that the officers were summoned, and Hugo, bowing low, looked his last at the king, and was led from the room.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HUGO'S LAST DAY.

Love is a spirit high presuming,
That falleth oft ere he sit fast;
Care is a sorrow long consuming,
Which yet doth kill the heart at last;
Death is a wrong to life and love;
And I the pains of all must prove.

SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

'SCROOP,' said Hugo, as the jailer led him back to his ward, 'it is all up with me, and to-morrow you'll be troubled by me no longer. Say, will you do me one favour ere we part?'

The jailer, to his secret indignation, felt a curious moisture about his eyes.

‘Let’s hear first what it may be,’ he said gruffly.

‘Tis no great matter,’ said Hugo. ‘An ink-horn, a goose-quill, three sheets of letter-paper, and to-night you promise to convey the budget to Sir William Denham’s house in Norfolk Street.’

The jailer promised to grant him this favour, and, indeed, short of allowing him to escape, he would have done almost anything for him, for over his rough and semi-brutalised nature Hugo had acquired a most strange influence.

The contrast between Whitehall and the Common Debtors’ Ward struck upon Hugo sharply as once more he found himself in his prison quarters. The ward was bitterly cold, though a fire burnt in the grate, over which several of the prisoners were making preparations for dinner, cooking such scraps of meat or vegetables as they had been able to secure, either with their own money or by the charity of the London shopkeepers. These were in the habit of placing stale bread, and such bones and scrapings as they could spare, in baskets provided for that purpose with an appeal for ‘Some bread and meat for the poor prisoners in Newgate! For the Lord’s sake pity the poor!’

Those who were not cooking were smoking, drinking, singing, dicing, or quarrelling, while above the confused uproar there rose an unusual sound—the sound of a child’s voice, crying bitterly. Hugo, shaking himself free from the importunate questioners who would fain have learnt where he had been to, made his way to that part of the ward whence the crying came. A pitiful little group met his gaze as he drew near. Upon the floor sat a delicate-looking woman, trying to comfort the sobbing child in her arms; beside her, playing unconcernedly with an apple, was a little fellow of three years old, his bright face quite free from care or anxiety, and contrasting painfully with that of the father who stood close by, a sombre-looking Puritan upon whose face there now rested the shadow of grievous trouble. He was not an attractive-looking man, but he seemed so miserable, and looked so out of place amid his surroundings, that Hugo felt impelled to make some sort of advance to him.

‘Methinks you are a new-comer, sir,’ he said, courteously, with a vivid recollection of his first day in the ward, and a longing to do what he could for this forlorn group.

‘Yes, sir,’ said the Nonconformist, severely, ‘I am a new-

comer, and I do not desire to make any acquaintance in this foul place.'

Hugo felt baffled, but would not give in.

'Tis ever harder to fresh comers,' he said, quietly. 'An you have not dined, I will go yonder and forage for you, for they serve strangers but roughly.'

Without waiting for a reply he crossed the ward, and with his own money bargained with a prisoner, who was called the caterer, for enough dinner for himself and the strangers, returning with some very passable broth and half a loaf.

'A scanty meal, I fear,' he said, smiling, 'but the best I could get. The children look hungry.'

It was not in the heart of man to resist such kindness. The sad-looking Nonconformist relented, and was soon dining with his fellow-prisoner.

'May I ask your name, sir?' he said at length. 'I looked not to find such as you in this place.'

'My name is Wharncliffe, and I got into trouble over the Plot. But this is like to be my last day here,' said Hugo, quietly, having no mind to go into details just then.

'I, sir, am one Thomas Delaune,' said the Nonconformist; 'my trial doth not come on till the thirtieth of this month, but they would not admit me to bail, therefore I and my wife and children are forced to come here; I cannot persuade my wife to leave, nor indeed were it fitting that she remained alone with no protector.'

'Yet is this a terrible place for her,' said Hugo.

'So much the worse for the Episcopalians who force us into Newgate. My sole offence, sir, is that I accepted the invitation of one of your Church of England men, Doctor Calamy, in his sermons entitled *A Scrupulous Conscience*, to propose our doubts with respect to Church ceremonies. I accepted that invitation, and printed in reply *A Plea for Nonconformists*. And for printing that work am I here in this foul place.'

'But surely Doctor Calamy will in that case procure your release?' said Hugo.

'I know not, sir,' said Delaune. 'Of an Episcopalian I never expect aught.'

'I am one,' said Hugo, smiling a little. 'And now methinks you must have divined the fact, for you were loth to expect aught but ill from me!'

Delaune would fain have converted him there and then, but before long Scroop entered with the writing materials which Hugo had asked for, and excusing himself he retired to his

own corner to write, as well as he could in the din and uproar, his three farewell letters, one to Mary Denham, one to Algernon Sydney, one to Joyce.

It was then that he first fully realised what the sentence of death meant. They were terrible letters to write,—terrible when he thought of himself, more terrible when he thought of those to whom he was writing. It was quite dusk in the ward before he had finished—in fact, Scroop stood beside him waiting for the budget before he had made it ready; it had taken him far longer than he had thought, and had cost him much. The jailer watched him in grim yet not unsympathetic silence.

‘You will bear it yourself?’ asked Hugo, sealing the packet and handing it to Scroop.

‘What matter who bears it, so as it goes?’ said the jailer.

‘It matters to me,’ said Hugo, ‘because I trust you, Scroop.’

‘Well, then, I will bear it,’ said the jailer, and without another word he left the ward.

Hugo looked wistfully after the budget; then, as the door was closed and locked behind the jailer, he covered his face with his hands. He had spoken boldly at Whitehall, had thought of the miseries of his life at Newgate, but fresh from that last letter to Joyce a wild clinging to life, a wild hope of escape, an intolerable longing for one more sight of his love had overmastered him. With all the vividness of a lively imagination, he lived through the horrible fate that awaited him on the morrow—lived through the pain and the shame and the indignity, struggled in the death-agony, till his heart sickened and his brain reeled. Not even the quiet of the condemned cell was to be his, for he was not condemned to death, only he had been warned of his fate. Laughter and brutal jests fell upon his ear; the ward seemed like a hell that night, yet that night, for the first time, he nearly succumbed to its temptations.

A number of drunken revellers were sitting not far from him; their noisy song reached him distinctly in his dusky corner; he watched the group with a sort of fascination, and listened to the following words:—

‘And when grim death doth take my breath,
He’ll find me with boon comrades merry;
He’ll find me drinking, drinking deep,
Sing derry down, down derry!
Death we defy! Pain comes not nigh
While drinking, drinking, drinking!’

He sprang to his feet, and was on his way to join the merry party, when something dragging at his doublet made him pause. He looked down, and saw Delaune's little child. All the afternoon he had been contentedly trundling his apple about the ward; now he had cut it in half, and, hungrily eating one bit, held the other up to Hugo. It diverted him from his purpose; he took the child on his knee, touched with the little thing's love and gratitude. His childish prattle made him smile.

Laughingly they fed each other with the apple, Hugo making a feint of eating a little to please the child. At last, when all was finished, the little one began to yawn and rub his eyes.

'Tom sleepy!' he said, piteously,—'no bed for Tom!'

Hugo was roused by this remark; the ward was terribly crowded that night, for in the last few days there had been many fresh arrivals. He looked round and saw that Delaune and his wife and her babe were sitting all huddled up together on a rough wooden bench at the other side of the room. They looked so miserable that he forgot his own misery in pitying them. What could be done for them? He looked at his own particular corner and his uncomfortable plank bed. It would be better than nothing. Examining the place carefully, he found two nails in the angle of the wall; he tried hanging his cloak across the corner, but it made a very ineffectual screen. Just at that minute Scroop returned to the ward.

'Have you borne the letter?'

Then, as the jailer nodded, Hugo placed in his hand one of his few remaining coins.

'There is one thing more I would fain have. 'Tis the last favour I will ask of you. I want a piece of sacking—a large piece.'

The jailer muttered something inarticulate, but went away, returning in a few minutes with a piece large enough to screen off as much of the crowded ward as was at Hugo's disposal. He had some difficulty in getting it up; in doing it he forgot his own fate, and was for the time almost happy, while Tom sat on the floor watching him and sucking his thumb philosophically.

'Now, little imp,' said Hugo, smiling, 'come and peep at your new chamber.'

Tom lifted the sacking and looked in at the dim expanse of planks.

'Comfy,' he said, clapping his hands and laughing merrily, 'comfy!'

That was reward enough for Hugo. He laughed a little, caught the child up in his arms, and strode across the ward to speak to the parents.

'I have done what I can for you, sir,' he said to Delaune. 'Your wife will find a sort of rough shelter yonder; I beg that you will take my quarters for to-night, for I shall be gone on the morrow.'

Delaune grasped his hand and thanked him warmly. His wife did not speak, but as she rose, with her baby in her arms, she looked up at Hugo with a gratitude in her eyes which lingered pleasantly in his memory. But not even the charms of the dusky little corner behind the curtain could tempt little Tom to desert his new friend; he clung tightly to him, and begged so piteously to be 'kept' that Hugo yielded, and, finding by good chance a vacant place beside the hearth, crouched down on the ground as near the fire as might be with the child in his arms.

'Take me wiv you on the morrow,' said Tom, sleepily.

There was such a babel all around that they could talk without the risk of being overheard.

'I cannot do that.'

'Why can't you take Tom too?'

'Because I am going to die.'

'To Die,' repeated Tom, dreamily. 'Where is Die? I would like to go too.'

'Not yet, poor little imp,' said Hugo, smiling sadly. 'There, kiss me and go to sleep.'

The child looked up at him for a moment with his solemn, sleepy eyes. 'Good-night,' he said, drowsily. 'But I wish little children could go to Die. Die is better than prison, isn't it?'

'Yes,' said Hugo, with a quiver in his voice, 'it is better. Good-night, little one.'

The rosy lips met his, and almost the next minute the child was fast asleep.

After awhile the drunken revel ended, oaths, songs, laughter died away into silence, sleep fell on the wretched prisoners, and stillness reigned in the ward; by the light of the dying embers Hugo could dimly discern the outline of the prostrate forms, and the untroubled face of the little sleeping child on his knee. He was glad to be quiet; the solemn stillness seemed to calm his mind, he could think of the morrow with less dread, could see through to the other side of the suffering.

'Was it not for Joyce's father? Was it not in a sense for Sydney?' He could think of Joyce more calmly now, Joyce

whom he had bidden to hold herself as free, Joyce who might now be wooed and won by other men. That thought did not torture him as it had done when Scroop had borne away the budget. He lost the thought of himself, thought only of her in her guileless simplicity, her sweet purity. Lovingly, and with much joy mingled with the pain, he lingered over his recollections of her. In the dreary Newgate ward there rose up for him the fairest of visions, the sweet, sunshiny face, the blue eyes that had always met his so innocently and confidently, the tender little mouth with its mingled sweetness and firmness. Never once had he seen a shade of aught that was hard or bitter in her expression. Even on that memorable night when he had made his confession to her, when with natural indignation she had turned upon him with the question, 'Why did you seek to injure my father?' there had been nothing petty or personal in her anger. And how soon her tender charity had sought an excuse for him! how quick she had been to check that impulse to blame another!

Far on into the night he sat dreaming of her, or rather wakefully living through again that brief passage in his life which had changed his whole world, as love does change the world of all of us, for good or for ill. His arms grew stiff and weary with holding little Tom, but he could not bear to disturb the child, and at length from excessive weariness he fell asleep, forgetting the fatigues of the long and eventful day, nor bestowing one thought upon them in his dreams. For two hours he slept as tranquilly as a child. But towards morning he dreamed strangely.

He thought he was once more in Germany; Count Hugo's castle on the Rhine once more rose before him, with its brown and rugged towers, and its battlements sharply defined against a clear frosty blue sky. Something of stir and commotion in the air warned him of change in that quiet country-side, and drawing nearer to the foot of the hill on which the castle stood, he saw that it was in a state of siege, and that the enemy had pitched their tents in the valley. He could hear the busy sounds of life coming from the camp, could see the soldiers fetching water from the Rhine, and at the door of the largest tent, from which floated the royal pennon, he could see the king and Randolph talking together. Just then he became aware of a sound of voices, and looking up he saw close beside him an old peasant talking to a little crying child.

He approached them, and asked who the child was, and what he did there.

'Sir,' said the old peasant, 'he is the son of Count Hugo up yonder at the castle, but the Count's enemies have taken him prisoner, and though they treat him kindly and let him roam about thus far, the little lad frets for his father, and to be in the old castle once more.' Then turning to the child, 'Yet do I not tell thee, boy, that 'tis best here, where thou canst eat and drink as thou wilt with no let or hindrance.'

But the child only sobbed the more, calling for its father, and for one to bear it home.

Hugo looked irresolutely, now at the royal tent, now at the crying child. Finally he thought of good Count Hugo, and looked at the castle high up on its lofty rock.

'They have no right, no right to steal you!' he cried, suddenly snatching up the child in his arms.

The peasant whimpered something about the 'divine right of kings!'

'Nothing is divine save the just and the loving!' cried Hugo. 'He who is just and true and wise, he who lives for the people, is king of men—none other.'

'Bear me home!' sobbed the child. 'Bear me home!'

Then he gathered himself together, and with one glance at the hostile camp below, began to scale the steep rock, and he knew that to scale it meant death to himself, yet hoped that he might shield the child, and struggle on till he reached the summit. All around him whizzed the arrows, one pierced the shoulder, then another and another, till he was like the picture of St. Sebastian in the church, and growing faint with loss of blood he staggered, and almost fell with his burden. But the child was unhurt, that nerved him to struggle on to the end, nerved him to resist the creeping numbing cold that made his limbs almost powerless. At last with a mighty effort he dragged himself to the summit of the rock, and staggered along the narrow platform which led from the drawbridge; the watchman caught sight of the child, ordered the bridge to be lowered, and gave the word in the castle. There was a great shout of joy raised, and a sound of doors opening and many feet approaching, while Hugo staggered across the court-yard, and laid his burden at the feet of his great namesake. And when, exhausted by the effort, he lay a-dying, the Count bent over him with a beautiful smile on his face, and whispered in his ear so that he alone might hear—

'It is the *Christ-Kind* you have carried.'

Then yet another form drew near, a black-robed form with stern face; and drawing closer so as to hide all sight of Count

Hugo and the child, he laid a cold hand upon his shoulder, and said—

‘Your time is come! Has death no terrors for you, that you lie thus smiling?’

‘No terrors!’ he exclaimed, conscious of a great joy in his heart of which he could not speak. ‘No terrors! I die for the *Christ-Kind*.’

He opened his eyes. Scroop stood beside him, shaking his shoulder roughly but not unkindly.

‘Well, sir, they most of them sleep quiet enough, poor souls, before they go out to die,’ he said, regarding Hugo curiously; ‘but I never yet saw one who could speak of dying with a smile.’

Hugo glanced round the ward, where, in the dim light of the winter morning, he could discern the worn faces of his fellow-prisoners.

‘It is death that I am leaving here,’ he said, thoughtfully. Then, kissing the little child, who still slept in his arms, he placed him carefully on the floor, covering him with his cloak. ‘Be kind to that little imp for my sake, Scroop,’ he said.

The jailer promised, and led him out of the ward to his own room, where he had prepared a breakfast for him. Hugo was touched. He tried to eat enough of the broiled beef, and to drink enough of the spiced ale, to satisfy Scroop, who hovered over him with a restless look, which sat strangely on his hard, grim features. Then came a final interview with Ambrose Philips, one more ineffectual effort to make him yield; but neither threats, nor reproaches, nor taunts could ruffle him that day. Philips retired, owning himself beaten, and, almost immediately after, Scroop returned.

‘You have but a couple of minutes more, sir,’ he said, his gruff voice a degree gruffer than usual.

‘It is enough,’ said Hugo, quietly; and, kneeling, he once more repeated Mary Denham’s collect, breathed the names of Joyce, Colonel Wharncliffe, Sydney, Randolph; then, rising to his feet, threw aside his doublet and vest.

‘I am ready,’ he said. ‘Lead on.’

Scroop thought of that first night, when he had led him into Newgate, and his heart smote him.

‘I have oftentimes been rough and rude with you, sir,’ he said, regretfully; ‘I crave your forgiveness.’

‘I am sure you have it,’ said Hugo, smiling a little. ‘I should have fared ill without you, Scroop.’

After that he did not speak, but walked steadily along the

cold stone passages. Then the great door was thrown wide, and he was led forth. The cold November wind on his bare shoulders made him shiver slightly ; but, with head erect, he walked on, fearlessly taking in all the details of the scene : the staring crowd, the cart and horse, Ketch, the hangman, armed with the terrible 'cat,' and the prison official waiting with a cord to bind his arms. He had scarcely advanced more than two or three paces, however, when there was a movement in the crowd, as of some one forcing his way to the front. A moment more, and old Jeremiah rushed forward, his blue livery half torn off his back, his white hair streaming in the wind, his wrinkled face wet with tears.

'My master ! my dear young master !' he cried. 'They cannot keep me from you now !'

'Why, Jerry !' exclaimed Hugo, his face lighting up ; 'to see you is almost worth a whipping. Come ! there is no call to weep over me. I shall, at any rate, be a man of action to-day !'

But at this Jeremiah only wept the more.

'Do not grieve,' said Hugo, in a low voice. "'Tis for the sake of one whom you love. A less glorious and sure way of helping him than that which the Ironside effected at Marston Moor, but—perhaps not wholly inglorious neither.'

In comforting the old serving-man he had forgotten to feel the humiliation of being tied to the cart's tail, and the presence of the old soldier gave him a curious strength.

'They cannot part me from thee now, lad,' said Jeremiah, dashing the tears from his eyes that he might see more clearly.

'No,' said Hugo, thoughtfully. 'Freedom lies along this road, Jerry.'

And as the procession moved off, and that last terrible journey began, he said to himself again and again words which had often comforted him in Newgate :—

'Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please.'

And Jeremiah walked side by side with his master.

-CHAPTER XXX.

JOYCE'S JOURNAL.

When sorrow would be seen,
 In her bright majesty—
 For she is a queen—
 Then is she dressed by none but thee ;
 Then, only then, she wears
 Her richest pearls—I mean thy tears.

Not in the evening's eyes,
 When they red with weeping are,
 For the sun that dies,
 Sits sorrow with a face so fair ;
 Nowhere but here doth meet
 Sweetness so sad, sadness so sweet.—CRASHAW.

November, 1683.—I never thought months could seem so long. But five have passed by since the day Hugo was borne away from Mondisfield, and yet the time seems to me more like to five years. We have tried to go on just as usual, thinking it best so, but oftentimes it has been hard to do it. A great gloom has fallen on the whole place. The corn ripened as usual, and we went into the harvest-field and watched the men at work and helped the women to bind the sheaves, and afterwards went a-gleaning as usual to help some of the poorer village folk. Then came the in-gathering, but with no harvest supper, for how could we feast and make merry with my father in exile ? After that came the apple-gathering, which made me think of that October day last year when I first saw Hugo. It seems to me now passing strange to think of that duel upon which so much hinged. It frightens me to recollect how much has in truth sprung from just that simple fact that Evelyn and I went into the road a-blackberrying. If we had not gone there would have been no duel, no meeting of Hugo, no delay of their cavalcade at the 'White Horse,' no knowledge of Mr. Ferguson's visit, no dispersal of the congregation in the barn, no secret clue for Cousin Randolph to work upon, no temptation for Hugo, no exile for my father. I suppose it is indeed ever so, and that upon all our trivial actions and words there follow long chains of results that we little dream of at the time. And this, methinks, is a conviction which should sober us impulsive folk, and make us seek right patiently the true wisdom.

April, 1684.

I was writing this in the musicians' gallery, a place I must ever love now above all others in the house, when I heard the galloping of horse's feet in the drive. I thought it might be the post-boy with perchance a letter from my father, for now that he is in safety at Amsterdam he has ventured to write to my mother more than once. Running down the stairs with all speed I hurried out to the door, and had flung it open just as the post-boy reined in his steed, a gallant bay, with wreaths of foam on his neck, for the post ever rides apace. The boy raised his hat respectfully, and took from his bag a letter—actually a letter for me—the first I ever received in my life. I knew in an instant that it must be from Hugo, and this I suppose must have shown in my face, for the post-boy, well pleased, muttered something which I had rather he had not so much as thought, and made me blush hotly. I ran quickly in search of my mother, having no money to pay the postage, and, finding her in the north parlour, showed her the letter.

'Stay here and read it, my little daughter,' she said. 'I will pay the man.'

I needed no second bidding, for a great hope had arisen in my heart. Surely if Hugo had at length found means to write to me then he must be at liberty once more, or at any rate in less strict durance. I know not what vain castle in the air I had raised even while breaking the seal, for I fear it hath ever been my way to hope, and to look for a speedy end to all care, since trouble and sorrow doth seem foreign to one's nature. Thus the sudden downfall of the vain hopes made the reading of that letter all the harder; I came more nigh to swooning than ever before in my life, yet did not wholly give way, for we Wharncliffes are strong and healthy, and do not easily succumb. My mother was some time gone; I had taken that one fatal glance at the letter, and then, after a long pause, had been able to read it steadily through before she returned. It was very clearly written, indeed it was the most beautiful and delicate handwriting I had ever seen. This was how it ran; I copy it here in my journal, for I should like the descendants to know how true and noble my Hugo was, and naught can show that so well as his own words.

'MY DEAR LOVE,

'At length there comes to me an opportunity of writing to you; my jailer, to whom I owe much, and who of late hath ever been kind to me, having promised to bear

this letter to one Mistress Denham, a friend of mine, who, knowing your name, will without risk be able to forward this to you. My dear heart, you will pardon these ill-penned lines, but I write in the midst of noise and confusion in the common prison, and my mind is like to the ward—full, too, of confusion and trouble. I do not know whether perchance you have had news of my trial, which took place on the seventh day of this month. My sentence was, as I had looked for, life-long imprisonment, with, moreover, some additional severities, which, I am well informed, are like to cost me my life. But, dear heart, these said severities are in truth a kindness, for a long life in Newgate would be a sore trial and temptation. Did you know how terrible have been these five months since I parted from you—did you know what pain and suffering I have borne, and what grievous temptation hath assailed me, you would rejoice when hearing that he who loves you—he whom you love—is likely to die shortly.

“Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas,
Ease after warre, death after life, does greatly please.”

Often have those words comforted me in my dungeon; and though there doth at times come the craving for life, and the pining for liberty, and most of all the longing for you, my dear one, yet I willingly embrace a death which means the safety and life of your father, and which may perchance blot out the memory of the wrong I wrought him. I pray you give my duty to both your father and mother, and I crave their forgiveness for all my offences. Especially I trust they will not deem that I did very wrong in speaking to you that day of my love. In any case tell them this,—that your love hath been to me as a strong shield, and hath saved me from hell on earth.

‘When all is said, however, it doth still remain that our joy hath been cruelly short-lived. But at least let me feel that I have not spoilt your life—let me believe that you will not be the poorer all your days for this brief interlude. Above all things, I would have you happy. To have saddened those dear eyes, to have darkened the life I found so bright—that would indeed be a hard fate. Dear one, I pray that you will not let this fate be mine.

‘The jailer waits, and these poor words must go. Read in them, dearest heart, the love I cannot write. I dreamed last night that your father was at home and in safety once more, that the household was again bright and peaceful, and

that you were standing by the elm-trees at the gate, happy and smiling as was ever your wont. I think the dream will come true; I pray you to let your share in it be true, and wherever I may be I think I shall know it. My dear one, I kiss your hands. And so farewell.

‘Yours in all love and devotion,

‘HUGO WHARNCLIFFE.

‘Written in Newgate, the 20th November, 1683.’

I do not well know what happened afterwards, only the day was lived through somehow, and the next, and the next, till a se’nnight had gone by. My mother kept me much with her, and taught me some difficult new stitches in embroidery, and drove over with me to St. Edmondsbury in the coach, and bought some fine woollen material, which she said I might embroider as a gown for the little daughter of the vicar of Osedean. I found a strange comfort in learning this embroidery, which was odd for one who cared so little for needlework; but I seemed to have no heart for books or music, and it was a sort of relief to stitch my grief into that little gown. And at length hope, which should have been killed by that letter, sprang up once more, and I could not but think that God would not let Hugo perish in that horrible place, but that he would save him and bring him back to us. My mother thought there might be some mention of him perchance in the news-letter, and oh! how I watched for its advent! There was, unluckily, a snow-storm which made it two days later than usual, but at length one snowy forenoon there rode up the drive Sir Henry Dale’s groom—Sir Henry being a neighbour of ours some six miles hence, and who undertakes to pass us on the news-letter, which we in turn send to the vicar of Osedean. I was sitting in the window-seat of the north parlour when I saw the groom ride over the bridge, but though so longing to have the letter I could not stir an inch to get it—could only wait what seemed an eternity while Roger took it in at the front door, and paused to fetch the man a tankard of ale to hearten him for his return journey. Then at last—and how plainly I can see it all!—Roger came into the parlour bearing the letter on the salver and handed it unconcernedly to my mother, rubbing the salver with his coat-sleeve as soon as she had removed the damp budget, lest the silver, which is the pride of his dear old heart, should be tarnished.

Then my mother broke seal of the budget and hastily read through the letter. I saw her turn very pale as she read, and

then, unable to bear the waiting any longer, I sprang forward, begging her to tell me the worst at once.

'It is as we feared, my little daughter,' said my mother, putting her arm around me, and trying to check her tears. 'But in this be comforted, dear child—your lover has died right nobly.'

I think my heart must have stopped beating; it seemed to me that I left off living, and when life began again I was years older. And yet there we were still in the north parlour—the room where he told me he loved me—and there were all the portraits looking down at us just as they had looked down upon Hugo and me that midsummer day; but he, my own true love, was dead!

I wanted to know more, and held out my hand for the letter, and, after a moment's hesitation, my mother gave it to me, and pointed to the paragraph. I remember it came after a far longer one about the illness of the King of Portugal, the queen's brother, and the news-letter discoursed much as to whether the whole town would be put into solemn mourning as well as the court upon his death, which appeared imminent.

Then followed these lines—

'Some talk hath been raised about the sentence passed by the Lord Chief Justice on a young Templar who, it is said, had much knowledge of the Plot, which, however, naught would induce him to reveal. The said Mr. Hugo Wharncliffe, who is well known in the town on account of his fine voice, was yesterday morning whipped from Newgate to Tyburn by the common hangman. It is said that he was warned by the authorities that he ran much risk, seeing that he was weakened by illness and long imprisonment; but, though offered a free pardon did he but reveal what he knew against the enemies of the Government, he persisted in his obstinate silence, and, to the general regret, hath in this useless way sacrificed a life which promised great things. His friends were in waiting at Tyburn with a hackney coach, to which he was carried in a dying condition, and, though a leech was at hand to render prompt assistance, Mr. Wharncliffe expired just as they reached Newgate.'

After that came an account of the trial of Mr. Algernon Sydney, but I could not read it then, because I could think of nothing but that awful scene which the news-letter put so blandly in a few cold lines.

Oh, my love! my love! do they call yours an 'obstinate silence'? Do they seek to shelter themselves by casting blame

on you? As though, forsooth, you were like to save yourself! As though you were like to ruin those for whom already you had done so much!

Just a few more words to this journal, which began so peacefully and ends so sorrowfully. After hearing of Hugo's death I had a long illness. I am well again now, and my hair has grown once more and my colour come back, yet there are times when it is hard to try to keep my love's last wish and request. It seems to me like one of these April days, when you have been glorying in the sunshine, and all at once the sun goes behind a cloud and leaves you shivering. And my sun will not come out again. Yet is the sun eternal, and shining still behind the blackness that separates us, and my true love is at rest, and has left pain and grief for ever.

The bad winter—the worst we have had in England for many generations—has kept us much to ourselves, and many of the news-letters have never been forwarded, so impassable were the roads. My mother wrote to cousin Randolph Wharncliffe, but he took no notice of her letter, therefore we have had no further account of Hugo's last days. But we have learnt of his trial from John Pettit at the 'White Horse,' who had to appear as witness, and grumbled sore at having to make so long a journey. He must have left London just before that 21st of November, which must ever be for me a day of mourning. But, since he had not seen his father for nigh upon fourteen years, he tarried at Bishop-Stortford on his way back, and so did not bring us his news until after the fatal news-letter had reached us. I remember well the day of his coming. It was just before I was taken ill, and I was sitting with my spinning-wheel in the gallery when Pettit was shown into the hall, and my mother made him sit by the hearth and tell all he could about the trial. And when I heard how Hugo would ask of his brother no question at all, and that he had made his own defence right ably, and had ever kept a steady and even temper, though that bad judge treated him so ill, then a glow of pride, almost of happiness, filled my heart, even though I could not help but weep when Pettit told how wan and ill he seemed, so changed he hardly knew him for the same.

But all that is over now, nor will I dwell on that last terrible day, which yet will haunt me in my dreams. I will not think of my love's pain and suffering, but of his courage and of his noble constancy, of his patience, and of his forgiveness of the one who had wronged him most of all. Thinking

thus will, I know, help me to keep his last wish, and to bear a cheerful heart and face. It shall never be said that he darkened my life! Nay, rather—my life, God helping me, shall be a better, and truer, and fuller thing for these brief months.

There is like to be much on hand in these next weeks, for my father desires us to join him at Amsterdam, seeing that there is as yet no likelihood of his being able to return to England. He can no longer endure to have us away from him, and so, if all things can be arranged, we are to leave Mondisfield before long, a kinsman of my mother's taking charge of the property until—if ever—we return. I think we shall return, because I cannot believe that Hugo's life was given in vain. I think my father will one day have his own again. I think Hugo's dream will come true.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WOMAN'S WORK.

A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.—*King Henry VI.*

THE king paced to and fro in his private room at Whitehall, the room in which he had interviewed Hugo. He was evidently ill at ease, the wrinkles and lines on his forehead which Hugo had noted on the previous day were now far deeper, and a lameness to which he had of late been subject showed more than ever in his gait. The ticking of his many clocks and pendules annoyed him. He ordered one of his attendants to stop them, with the exception of one which stood upon the carved mantelsheff. Then, further giving orders that he should be left alone, he continued his restless walk, glancing now at the clock, now at the picture of Hobbes just above it, now at the *Noli me tangere* opposite the door. The clock struck six, and the king muttered an impatient oath.

'So late!' he exclaimed, under his breath. 'I doubt matters have, after all, gone ill. Damnation take Jeffreys, if he fails in getting the verdict!'

He continued his restless walk for some quarter of an hour, making every now and then ejaculations of impatience until at length one of the ushers appeared at the door.

‘The Lord Chief Justice is in waiting, and craves an audience of your Majesty,’ he announced.

The king gave orders that he should be at once admitted to the presence, and in a few moments the choleric-looking Jeffreys, with his large, heavy-jawed, sensual face, was ushered into the king’s private room.

‘I bring your Majesty good news,’ he said, modulating his harsh voice to a fawning and courtier-like tone. ‘The jury have brought in a verdict of “guilty.” I and my learned friends, having consulted together how we might best compass the death of Colonel Sydney, have succeeded indifferently well, my liege.’

He smiled blandly, but it was a smile that made even the king wince.

‘Did the jurors take long in agreeing?’ asked the king, sharply.

‘Well, my liege,’ said Jeffreys, ‘I own that they were inclined to be restive, even though they had been most carefully selected for the purpose,’—he chuckled to himself involuntarily. Then, remembering that he was in the king’s presence, went on, more soberly—‘Knowing the importance of the case, I made bold, my liege, to follow them out of court, on pretence of taking a cup of sack, and then I took the opportunity to give them more particular instructions. After that, they were but a half-hour gone, and returned with the verdict against Colonel Sydney. I trust your Majesty is satisfied?’

‘Quite satisfied,’ said the king; but nevertheless there were signs in his face that he was passing through some inward struggle.

‘My liege,’ said Jeffreys, ‘I trust you will pardon me the boast, but I must say that no man in my place hath ever rendered unto any king of England such services as I have rendered your Majesty this day. Not only have I made it pass for law that any man may be tried by jurors who are not freeholders, but I have made it pass also that one witness can condemn a man, provided there be any concurrent circumstances. Your Majesty is well rid of this traitor.’

‘That is very true,’ said the king. ‘I am aware that you have rendered me very valuable services in an exceptional case. Wear this in remembrance of the day;’ he drew from his finger a costly ring, and handed it to the Lord Chief Justice, who withdrew with many expressions of gratitude and loyalty.

When he was gone, the king flung himself back in a chair, with a sigh of weariness and disgust. He had obtained his wish, but he had obtained it in a way which jarred upon his better nature; and then, moreover, it sickened him to think that fiends incarnate like Jeffreys would fawn upon him and kiss his hand, while such as Hugo Wharncliffe shrank back, and told him to his face that he was no better than a murderer. He looked at the place where the ring had lately been, as though he half expected to see there the blood-stain of which Hugo had spoken. Then, suddenly remembering that by this time the speaker's fate would have been decided, he hastily summoned one of his attendants.

'Have you heard aught of Mr. Wharncliffe?' he asked, not trying to conceal his anxiety.

It was well known, however, that the young tenor had always been a favourite with the king, and the gentleman showed no surprise.

'I heard at noon to-day, my liege, that he died as they bore him back to Newgate,' he replied. 'But it was no more than a rumour, and possibly ill-founded.'

'I wish to know the truth,' said Charles, hastily. 'Let inquiry be made at once, and bring me full particulars.'

The messenger returned more speedily than the king had expected.

'Tidings have this moment arrived, my liege, that the report was false. Mr. Wharncliffe did but swoon as they bore him back to the jail. His friend, Sir William Denham, had brought to his assistance a noted leech, and he recovered the prisoner after a while. They say he may last out the night, which will save the scandal of his dying on the road.'

'Then he is, after all, dying?' said the king, with keen disappointment in his voice. 'As well have died at once.'

'Yes, my liege, they say he is dying past dispute; but 'tis surely better that he should die in private, as it were. A death on the road would provoke comment and give scandal.'

'Confound scandal!' said the king angrily. 'What is that to me, when I would have the man alive, not dead? A fig for scandal! There, leave me! I would be alone.'

Hugo's words returned to him now very bitterly. 'My God! to think what power rests with one man!'

Power did in truth rest with him! Would that it did not! He hated his power just then, for he was keenly conscious that he had abused it. Gladly, oh, how gladly would he at that moment have changed places with any one of his subjects.

Once more it seemed to him that the white haggard face was raised to his with that passionate appeal for mercy towards Sydney, or, rather—for there had been pride mingled with the request—not for mercy, but merely common justice. And what had he done? He had allowed the noble petitioner, the man whom he knew to be innocent, to be flogged to death, while the man who had violated the law and desecrated justice he had sent away with a special token of his royal favour. Should he even yet save Sydney's life? Should he make even now an effort to repair the horrible injustice which he had countenanced and rewarded? A strong desire for right took possession of him. After a moment's thought he did the wisest thing he could have done, and sent a message to Lord Halifax, desiring to speak with him.

Halifax was Sydney's nephew by marriage, and had for some time been one of the ruling spirits of the day. He was the head of those men in the state who were called 'Trimmers,' but he himself was loth to be looked upon as the head of any party, even of that which avoided all extremes, for he disapproved of party altogether, and while disagreeing very much with his uncle's views, disapproved quite as much of the king's despotic rule. He was a keen, clever, broad-minded man, and a man who invariably sided with the persecuted. His interview with the king was not long, but it was fruitful in results.

That evening, when Hugo lay dying in Newgate, and Algernon Sydney in his cell in the Tower sat writing the account of his mockery of a trial to the king, and praying for an audience, Charles himself was quietly stealing down his back staircase alone and unattended. Outside he found in waiting a hackney coach, and within Lord Halifax, who greeted him as though he were some ordinary friend, and bending forward bade the coachman drive to the house of one Major Long in the City. The king spoke little, but he looked eager and anxious, and from time to time glanced out of the window of the coach to see what progress they were making. Arriving at length at Major Long's house, they were ushered into a large room hung with tapestry and dimly lighted by wax candles; the king made Halifax go first, and kept his own face wrapped in a muffler until the servant who had admitted them was out of sight, then he tossed it impatiently aside, and crossing the room, which was empty, stood before the fire, the look of impatient anxiety in his face deepening every moment.

'Is this the way for a son to treat a father?' he exclaimed at last, turning angrily to Halifax. 'I did wrong in coming here; I compromise my dignity. Doth he keep me waiting as though I were some churl?'

'My liege, believe me, the duke is entirely repentant,' said Lord Halifax. 'But doubtless he dreads the meeting, fearing your displeasure. And for your dignity, my liege, methinks it will not be compromised by going half-way to meet the erring one like him we read of in the Scriptures.'

As he spoke the door opened, and there entered a young man, negligently dressed in a suit of shabby black velvet. He was the prodigal in question, Charles's favourite son, the Duke of Monmouth, who, having compromised himself several times by countenancing insignificant and unsuccessful plots, was now in hiding in the City, having contrived to escape when the news of the Rye-House Plot was first published. His face, though a trifle too broad for its length, was strikingly handsome, the dark eyes were large and liquid, the contour of the cheeks beautiful as a woman's. But although his appearance, combined with the unmistakable Stuart charm of manner, precisely fitted him for the rôle of popular idol, he was altogether lacking in the mauliness, the self-reliance, and the dogged perseverance which must characterise a popular leader.

Lord Halifax looked uneasily from one to the other; upon the king's brow stern displeasure strove hard to subdue the tenderer feelings which were at once excited by the sight of his favourite, while Monmouth, though extremely fond of his father, seemed little inclined at that moment to own himself in the wrong, or humbly to sue for forgiveness. The peacemaker, like all peacemakers, had an anxious time of it, particularly as he was naturally unable to take any part in the interview, and could only view it from a discreet distance. He knew how much depended on its results, and waited in breathless suspense, while the king, with great severity, yet with the air of a father, reproached the duke for consorting with men who were known to be hostile to him, and for taking counsel with those who must in the end prove his ruin. Finally, he offered him a free pardon provided that he would in all things submit without reserve to the royal pleasure.

Monmouth seemed to waver, an impulse seized him to fling himself at his father's feet, and make a comfortable ending of his exile and disgrace, but a second impulse restrained him, he swayed to and fro, not knowing what course to take. And

thus in uncertainty the interview ended, Charles, however, showing him such marked affection on leaving that Halifax greatly hoped his mission would after all prove successful.

Making haste to follow up his advantage, he returned later in the evening, and after much persuasion induced Monmouth to write a penitent letter to the king. One by one he forced out the reluctant admissions, regret for all his past offences, a petition that he might not be put upon his trial or sent to prison, a request for advice as to how he might best appease the wrath of the Duke of York, and finally a politic sentence which cost Halifax at least half-an-hour's argument with the reluctant scribe—'I throw myself at the feet of your Majesty, to be disposed of as your Majesty shall direct for the remainder of my life.'

Having extorted this much, Halifax was content, and went away wearied, yet not ill-satisfied with his evening's work. He had not calculated, however, on the man with whom he had to deal, nor did he in the least understand the strange mixture of nobility and weakness, impulsiveness and generosity, love of peace and impatience of evil which characterised the young duke.

As he passed down Newgate Street, the sight of a private coach at the main entrance, and the somewhat unusual spectacle of a lady being escorted into the jail, made him pause for an instant. He looked after the retreating forms, then he glanced at the livery of the serving-man, and at the device upon the coach door. Notwithstanding the uncertain light of his torch he saw enough to convince him that the arms emblazoned on the panel were the Denham arms.

'They go to bid farewell to that poor victim of Jeffreys,' he said to himself, and with that he sighed and fell into a painful reverie.

In the meantime, Sir William led Mary through the dismal passages in the great prison. Their admittance at such an hour was a great privilege, but now that Hugo's sentence had been carried out, now that the work for which he had been needed had perforce been carried through without his aid, the prison authorities were quite willing to grant some slight indulgence to one whom they knew to have been grossly ill-treated. All was over now, the victim had but a few more hours to live—they were willing to gratify his dying wishes.

'He has been asking for you all the evening,' said Sir William. 'Your name is the only one that hath passed his lips. And perchance you with your woman's skill may be

able to do more for his comfort, poor lad, than we rough men-folk.'

This had passed in the coach, as they drove from Norfolk Street to the jail.

'I am glad you summoned me, sir,' said Mary, gratefully, and there was a tremor in her voice which did not escape her uncle's notice.

'My dear niece,' he said, taking her hand in the darkness, 'hath aught passed betwixt you and Hugo? Have there been love-passages betwixt you, my dear?'

'Never, uncle,' she said, resolutely; 'but he hath ever counted me as his sister, so much so as to make me the confidante of his troubles. For you must know that he loves a maiden whom I must not name to you. But methinks I have not broken trust by telling you thus much.'

'I would he had loved thee,' said Sir William. 'An thou hadst been betrothed to him, it would have been less like to cause scandal that I bring thee to visit him thus. Art prepared for that, my love? Folks credit not such friendships as thine in these evil days.'

The hot blood rushed to her cheeks and the tears to her eyes. She knew that her uncle spoke the truth; she knew, moreover, that Hugo had asked for her just because she was the one medium of communication between himself and Joyce. Well, at least she could be to him that medium. At least she could bring him a comfort which no one else could bring. Angrily and almost contemptuously she strangled the thoughts of self which had arisen, and turned instead to the two whom she had schooled herself always to think of together—Hugo and Joyce. For Joyce, whom she had never seen, had become to her a very real person; she had loved her when she had only guessed that Hugo loved her, she had sympathised with her through the sad months of that long autumn, and had gladly forwarded Hugo's letter to her on the previous day. She had indeed learnt to think so much of her that, as she walked along the dreary prison corridors, it was no thought of herself which filled her heart with sorrow and her eyes with tears; neither was it any thought of Hugo. It was the thought of the other who would so fain have been in her position, of the unknown Joyce far away in the old Suffolk hall, who would not so much as know that her lover was dying.

They had mounted some tedious flights of stairs, and now the jailer paused before a narrow door, and softly opened it. Mary glanced hastily round. It seemed to her a most wretched

little room, almost full of people, but for Newgate it was princely accommodation. For Scroop had taken care that the prisoner should not be taken back to his old quarters in the Common Debtors' Ward; but, determined that he should at least die in peace, had borne him to his old room, for which upon his entrance he had paid so heavy a fee. Bampffield and Griffith stood beside his bed, and, in curious contrast to the two aged ministers, Rupert Denham, in his usual many-coloured raiment, and the richly-dressed leech. At their approach, Rupert turned, and, drawing back from the bedside, made room for Mary.

Then for the first time she caught sight of Hugo—for the first time since that May morning when he had come to tell them about his visit to Penshurst, and to claim their pity for himself on account of that visit to Longbridge Hall which he had so greatly dreaded. She remembered how they had managed to cheer him, and had sent him off laughing. His face—young, fresh, and healthful—rose before her. Was it possible that this could be Hugo—this man with lines of care on his brow, with lines of pain round his mouth, with a face so white, so changed, so deathly? Ah! what had they been doing to him to change him thus?

A passion of love and pity seemed to fill her whole being, and to crowd out every other thought. She was vaguely conscious all the time that old Jeremiah sat at the head of the bed holding his young master in his arms, but for the other spectators she had no thought as she knelt beside him, bent down close to him, and called him by name. There was no answer, however, and she heard a whisper from the leech which seemed to pierce her heart like a sword-thrust.

'Past speaking, I fear. Sinking fast.'

'Hugo, Hugo!' she cried, in an agony, 'I am come to you, Hugo! I have sent your letter to Joyce!'

His eyelids seemed to quiver a little, and Mary instinctively knew what spell had brought him back to life.

'I have sent your letter to Joyce,' she repeated.

The great grey eyes were now open, not dreamily peaceful as of old, but bright with pain, and at the same time eagerly watchful.

'Have you no message to send to her?' asked Mary. 'The poor child, you would not leave her with no comfort—no last word.'

He seemed to make a great effort in obedience to her request.

'Tell her,' he whispered, faintly, 'that it was for her, and therefore sweet.'

'What was sweet?'

'To die.'

The words were more breathed than spoken.

'Nay,' said Mary, 'but you must live for her, not die, Hugo.' She glanced quickly at the leech, who placed in her hands a cup containing some strong restorative. And Hugo, who had refused or had been unable to swallow it before, now obeyed mechanically, while Mary talked on soothingly as though he had been a child. 'You will take it for her sake, will you not, Hugo? You would not grieve her by dying, you know; you will struggle hard to live, just for her. She is so young—so young to be left to such sorrow. You will get better, and then you will write to her. Trust me, I will send your letters.'

'I don't understand,' he said, pitifully, but with more strength in his voice. 'I can do naught for her here. 'Tis all over. Let me die.'

'That will I not,' she said, resolutely. 'You cannot understand, Hugo, but you must trust me. Some more cordial. There! Now you must sleep. For her sake, you know, for her sake.'

She kept passing her fingers rhythmically through his hair from front to back. She was kneeling upright now, that she might have more power; she did not understand why it was, but this apparently mechanical action seemed to make vast demands on her strength. No one interfered with her, they had all tried their best with the patient, and had failed; they watched with a sort of curiosity, glancing now at the pale, resolute, absorbed face of the girl, now at the calm face on the pillow. Presently they saw, to their surprise, that Hugo had fallen asleep like a child. His nurse rose then; she looked worn out and exhausted, and there were dark shadows beneath her eyes. She laid her hand on Rupert's arm.

'Take me home, please, cousin, take me home,' she said, with again that irrepressible quiver in her voice.

And Rupert silently obeyed.

The leech looked after her curiously as she left the room. She had succeeded where he had failed. He knew well enough that the patient owed his life to her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SEVENTH OF DECEMBER.

There is no murder which history has recorded of Cæsar Borgia exceeds in violence, or in fraud, that by which Charles took away the life of the gallant and patriotic Sydney.—LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

It was many days before Hugo was capable of thinking clearly. Life was a kind of vague pain ; his shoulders were so cruelly torn and lacerated that the slightest movement, even the action of breathing, was torture, while the exposure to the raw cold of the November day had brought back his old enemy the ague. He was as ill as he well could be, but alive, and likely to live. Every one dinned this continually in his ears, and he did not feel grateful to them, though doing his best to feel glad that they were glad.

Often as he lay there in his weakness, he would try to call up in vision that 21st of November. But he never could recall it clearly, for, happily for human beings, physical pain cannot be very vividly recalled, but is dimmed and blurred by the passage of time. He had only the vaguest recollections of great suffering, though one or two trivial incidents were indelibly stamped upon his brain. He remembered noticing a holly-tree in the Oxford Road laden with red berries ; he remembered the pitying face of a child ; he remembered how, just at the end of that awful journey, when Tyburn was in sight, he had heard a robin singing among the bushes by the roadside. And most vividly he could recall the comforting presence of old Jeremiah. Thinking it all over one day, he began to wonder how Jerry had learnt of his fate ; how he had persuaded Randolph to allow him to come to the prison. Had his brother some lingering love for him, after all ? Had he perhaps sent the old serving-man, though he would not come himself ? He turned round with almost the first voluntary question he had put since his illness. The old soldier sat beside him as usual, indeed he almost lived with him, being the last visitor to leave Newgate at night and the first to arrive in the morning.

‘Did my brother send you ?’ he asked, faintly.

‘No, dear lad,’ said Jeremiah, ‘he sent me not ; I am no longer in his service.’

It was a bitter disappointment. Hugo kept silence for some time. Then the consciousness of Jerry's devotion began to comfort him again, and, thinking of the old servant, he turned hastily with a second question.

'Why did you quit his service? Was it for me, Jerry, for me?'

'Ay, dear lad,' said Jeremiah, quietly. 'What else would you have? I did but stay with him till they would let me come to thee here. I will call no one master save thee.'

'A sorry master,' said Hugo, with the ghost of a smile flitting across his haggard face. 'A master who will end his days in jail, and who has no power of giving wages. An unprofitable service, Jerry. I am a bad investment.'

Then seeing the doubtful, bewildered look on the old man's face he changed his tone, and, taking the rough hand, clasped it fast in both of his. 'God bless you for it, Jerry, God bless you!'

That was all that ever passed between them on the subject, neither of them being men of many words.

Mary and Sir William had visited him daily, but it was not until the afternoon when he had had the above conversation with Jeremiah, that he took very much note of their presence or attempted to talk to them. He was now much more himself, and welcomed them with some show of eagerness. Then, when Sir William was engrossed in conversation with Bampffield, he for the first time asked Mary about his other letter.

'You have said naught of Colonel Sydney,' he said, quietly. 'You sent him my letter?'

'Yes,' said Mary, 'Ducasse gave it to him that very day.'

'Do not fear to tell me the worst,' said Hugo, gently. 'The trial went against him, did it not?'

She signed an assent.

'The king told me his fate was sealed,' said Hugo. 'When is it to—to——' he broke off, unable to frame the words.

'That is not yet certain; no warrant has been issued as yet; and, Hugo, I hardly know whether I ought to say it, but we heard it rumoured that the king seemed to waver after receiving Colonel Sydney's account of the trial. They say too that the pardon of the Duke of Monmouth may have some bearing upon Colonel Sydney's case.'

'What! the duke pardoned?' exclaimed Hugo.

'Ay, he was at Whitehall not many days since,' said Mary. 'And they say he hath made full confession and hath told the king all that he knew of the conspiracy. He saw the king

and the Duke of York, and hath received his pardon under the great seal. Moreover we heard it from one high in authority, whom, however, I must not name, that the king had given him six thousand pounds, and had taken him once more into favour.'

'What does that bode?' said Hugo, musingly. 'I should not have thought the duke would have turned informer.'

'That is what no one will believe,' replied Mary; 'and they say that he goes about everywhere dropping hints that he said naught to the king which could criminate any of those brought up for trial. And this having reached the king's ears, he is very angry with him again, and they say he insists that the duke shall write and sign a statement confirming all that passed in the interview.'

'You have brought me hope,' said Hugo, gratefully; 'you have made me better already.'

'There is one thing more I must tell you,' said Mary, with a happy light in her eyes. 'That same one whom I mentioned to you told us also that he believed your interview with the king had much to do with his hesitation about Colonel Sydney, that and your—your illness.'

They were both of them young and hopeful; they thought that already the good would be brought out of the evil; they thought they should see of the travail of their souls, and be satisfied here and now. But the very next day there came a sharp reverse. Whigs and Tories alike were startled and shocked when the warrant was issued, 'contrary to all men's expectations,' for the execution of Algernon Sydney. They hesitated at first to tell the ill news to Hugo, but at length Sir William bade his niece break the tidings to him as gently as might be. It was hard work, and yet she was glad that they had chosen her for the task.

It was a bitterly cold winter's morning, and she had brought with her to the prison all manner of wraps for the invalid from Lady Denham: she talked as long as she could about trivial matters, deferring the evil day. But such little expedients are of no use between friends. Hugo instantly perceived how matters were.

'You have something to tell me?' he said, quietly.

'We hoped too soon, Hugo,' she replied, in a choked voice.

'The warrant is issued?'

'Yes.'

'What day?'

‘The seventh of December.’

‘Friday,’ said Hugo, musingly. ‘A fit day for one who dies for the people.’ Then, shuddering, and with a look of horror in his eyes, ‘It will not be the worst way, will it?’

‘No, no,’ she replied, quickly. ‘They will spare him that. He will be beheaded.’

‘O God!’ he cried, ‘if I could but be with him! ’Tis hard, ’tis hard, that the wretchedest beggar in London may look his last on him while I lie here in jail!’

He turned faint, and Mary had as much as she could do to recover him, Bampffield assisting her, and speaking kindly words, which comforted her afterwards more than at the time. Presently, when Hugo was himself again, he turned to her with another question.

‘What of the Duke of Monmouth?’

‘We have heard from the same source that he did write the letter which the king demanded, but wrote it evasively; that the king demanded a plain and unmistakable statement, and that, after great hesitation, he at length wrote and signed it, but had no sooner done so than he hurried to Whitehall, overwhelmed with shame and horror at what he had done, and pleaded passionately with the king to restore him the paper. The king, after long expostulation, induced him to sleep upon the matter, but the next morning the duke returned with his request, and the king restored the paper to him, but by the Lord Chamberlain sent him word that he was never again to come into the royal presence. They say, the duke being much grieved at his father’s severity, his wife persuaded him again to sign a paper with the information which the king desired, but his Majesty at once refused to entertain the proposal, and it is thought that he will persevere in his intention of never again seeing the duke.’

‘And it was after this that the warrant was issued?’ asked Hugo.

‘Yes; the king, being wroth at hearing how Monmouth’s friends were everywhere saying how he had not criminated any one by his statement, said that, did he pardon Colonel Sydney, he should be countenancing these said reports. Ducasse was at our house this morning.’

‘Ah!’—Hugo’s face lighted up—‘what said he of his master?’

‘That he was busy writing a short account of his life, and that he asked often after you, and would write to you—that he rejoiced to hear that you were likely to live.’

‘And how took he the ill news?’

‘Ducasse was with him when the sheriffs arrived at the Tower. He said his master was surprised, having thought, like every one else, that it was impossible the king would allow such a mockery of a trial to pass. But when they handed him the paper, he read it through with an unmoved face, for all the world as though it had been a playbill, with details of some mock tragedy. And when he had ended he turned to the sheriffs, and said to them that he would not say one word to them on his own behalf, seeing that he was ready to die, and that the world was naught to him; but very sternly he called to their remembrance how grievously they had sinned against the people of this land in packing a jury and in causing their office to be evil spoken of by acting thus with injustice and servility.’

‘That was like him,’ said Hugo, in a low voice. ‘It was ever the “People” with him—“self” never.’

‘And Ducasse says,’ continued Mary, ‘that the sheriffs looked blank enough as though they were pricked at heart, and one of them fairly burst into tears.’

Shortly after Sir William came to fetch his niece home, and seeing that Hugo had talked already more than he ought to have done, and was likely to talk so long as she remained, she thought it best to leave the jail as soon as might be.

‘Uncle,’ she said, as they drove back to Norfolk Street, ‘shall you go to be present at Colonel Sydney’s death?’

‘No, my love,’ said Sir William, with a shudder. ‘I am ever old for such horrors. My God! How comes his Majesty to permit such an injustice!’ And Sir William, staunch Tory as he was, broke into a passionate denunciation of the wrong that had been wrought.

Arrived at the house, Mary hastily sought her cousin.

‘Rupert,’ she said, ‘are you going to Tower Hill next Friday?’

‘Not I,’ he replied, with an oath, and an irrepressible shudder. ‘I have no taste for death-scenes, least of all for public ones.’

She said no more, but shut herself into the parlour and tried to think out the pros and cons of the idea that had come to her.

Hugo longed to be present at the last with his friend and teacher, but lay helpless in jail. He would wish to hear from a faithful eye-witness all that passed. Yet more, he

ought to be told carefully, lovingly, not coarsely and brutally by some prison official or some chance visitor. Her uncle would not go, her cousin would not go—should she—ah! horrible idea! could she possibly go herself? The mere thought sickened her. And yet was she to think of her own feelings where Hugo was concerned? Was she to be conquered by the mere horror of a frightful sight, or dismayed by the thought that people might blame her, mistaking her motive? She was not much in the habit of consulting other people, being of an independent nature, and having always been obliged to think for herself, since Lady Denham was a semi-invalid, Sir William absorbed in scientific matters, and Rupert the last person in the world to give help or advice in any difficulty. So, after much inward debate, she rang the bell and summoned old Thomas the butler.

‘Thomas,’ she said, bidding him close the door behind him, ‘did you not tell me you had a kinswoman kept a house on Tower Hill?’

‘Ay, Mistress Mary. ’Tis my cousin by marriage, and a very worthy dame too, her husband is a vintner in a small way.’

‘Ask her, then, if you may bring me to her house on Friday morning,’ said Mary. ‘Tell her that I have special reasons for desiring to see Mr. Sydney once more as he passes to his death.’

The old servant seemed about to make some remonstrance, but on second thoughts he checked himself, and, without any comment, promised to do as his young mistress wished. The deed thus done, the step irrevocably taken, poor Mary underwent a sharp reaction, and awaited the day with dread and shrinking unspeakable.

It came at length—a fresh, bright December day. Very early—almost as soon as it was light—Mary got into a sedan-chair, and with Thomas in attendance they made their way through the streets, having agreed that it was best to reach their destination before the crowd of spectators should have assembled; indeed, when they reached Tower Hill, there was scarcely a soul about, only a few street boys gaping up with awestruck faces at the scaffold which some workmen were draping with black cloth. Thomas led the way into a respectable-looking house, where a bustling housewife with a round, rosy face came out to receive them, curtsying low, and smiling with a bland hospitality which seemed out of keeping with the day.

'Tis the best house on all Tower Hill for the sight,' she said, cheerfully, smoothing her apron as she spoke. 'Many's the party that come to me on execution days, and many is the golden guinea that my windows have gained me. Not but what I'm proud to do it for Sir William Denham's family just out of respect, and taking no account of payment.'

'No, that must not be,' said Mary, pressing a gold coin into the good woman's hand. 'But yet for the love you bear my uncle's family I will ask you as a favour, let no one else come into the room whence I am to look forth.'

The buxom housewife smiled and promised, conducting the visitor as she spoke to a little disused room full of apples stored on long wooden shelves round the walls.

'This is a poor place, madam, but I assure you the best view of the scaffold. You'll hear every word that passes from here!' and with that the worthy dame threw open the window and was proceeding to tell Mary of all the executions she had witnessed from this particular spot, when a knock below made her hastily withdraw.

'More spectators, I warrant,' she remarked with satisfaction. 'But I will mind and not let them disturb you, mistress.'

Mary thanked her, but took the precaution of bolting the door as soon as she was out of hearing. Then she knelt down and tried to prepare for the morning that awaited her. After a while, when she had gained the mastery of herself and was quite calm and composed, she went to the window and looked forth. By this time an immense crowd had gathered in the open space around the scaffold; she could hear the sound of many voices rising up, a meaningless and ceaseless roar which seemed to throb against her ears with every now and then more emphatic pulsations.

Gradually the throng grew thicker and denser, and every window, and even the roofs and chimneys of the houses were crammed with eager on-lookers. And now the church clocks struck ten, and Mary observed a sort of movement in the huge swaying mass of heads below; she glanced at the scaffold and saw that the executioner had just arrived, and stood confronting the people with his black half-mask and the axe grasped in his right hand. She heard some one below say the sheriff's had gone to the Tower, and that 'it' would be soon. Then came a waiting which, though in reality short, seemed like an eternity. Mary knelt at the window, her elbows on the sill, her hands tightly clasped, her eyes fixed on the most distant

point of the narrow gangway, the point where she knew that ere long Sydney would appear. At length came a second movement of the heads below, a vibration seemed to thrill through the dense crowd, the word was passed from one to another that the prisoner was coming. Mary's breath came fast, and her heart throbbed painfully, as the familiar figure turned the corner, and advanced along the narrow pathway between the people.

He had walked on foot from the Tower, the sheriffs on either side of him, while close to him was his faithful valet Ducasse, and an old family servant of whom he was fond. They were the sole friends for whose presence he had petitioned, nor would he have priest or minister to attend him in his last moments. Had it not been for the grave sheriffs and the sorrowing servants, Mary could have fancied that he was but taking an ordinary walk, so tranquil and unmoved was his face, so natural his mien. Many a time she had seen him enter her uncle's house with a look of care, and with the gait of an elderly man; to-day he looked young and alert, full of life and yet indifferent to death, the centre and chief attraction of that huge assembly, but apparently the least concerned individual in the throng.

Never once did he speak to his companions—he had ceased to think of individuals at all, he had ceased even to think of himself, he thought of God—of God and the people. That vast crowd which had gathered together to gaze at his last sufferings did not in the least disturb his peace. The publicity could no longer gall him, since the thought of his own individuality had been lost and merged in something higher. Steadily, briskly, he walked on until he reached the scaffold—the dreary-looking scaffold with its mournful hangings, its floor and staircase covered with black. As his foot touched the first step he paused, his other foot resting for the last time on the fair, beautiful earth which he was leaving for ever. The thought of self returned, he glanced up the narrow black stairs, right up to the clear blue December sky.

The People—and Death! Ay, he, Algernon Sydney—he, spite of his sins and shortcomings and manifold failures, was to die for them—for them and their liberties. It was well. He raised his eyes to heaven in silent thanksgiving. Then with his usual calm dignity, his usual slightly austere manner, he quietly walked up the stairway, glanced with stoical indifference at the black coffin, and, making his way to the block, stood silently watching the people below.

There was a breathless silence—a silence which might be felt. Was he about to address the assembly? No, that could hardly be, for he raised his voice scarcely above its ordinary tone. So clear and distinct were his refined accents, however, that every word reached Mary Denham.

‘I have made my peace with God, and have nothing to say to men; but here is a paper of what I have to say.’

With this he handed a packet to the sheriff, who asked whether he would not read it to the crowd or have it read. But Sydney, weakened by long imprisonment, and feeling the keen December air after such close confinement, declined.

‘No,’ he replied. ‘But if you will not take it, I will tear it.’

‘Is the paper written in your handwriting?’ asked the sheriff.

‘Yes,’ replied Sydney.

After that the sheriff consented to take the paper, and Sydney, turning to Ducasse, placed in his hand another paper and bade him farewell, kindly, but with no effusion. The valet had not been so long in the Republican’s service without learning to control his emotional French nature. Lovingly but silently he received his master’s hat, coat, and doublet, nor allowed the tears to start to his eyes until Sydney had turned from him to the executioner.

‘I am ready to die, I will give you no further trouble,’ he said, and, holding out his hand, proffered the executioner three guineas, it being the custom in those days that people should pay for the trouble they gave in having their heads cut off. The executioner chinked the gold in his hand with a discontented air.

‘I looked for more than this from your honour; an earl’s son might have come down with more than a paltry three guineas.’

A slightly sarcastic expression stole over Sydney’s face, but he turned to his valet.

‘Joseph, my friend, give the fellow another guinea or two,’ he said.

Then, while Ducasse produced the money and handed it to the headsman, Sydney knelt down and said a prayer ‘as short as a grace.’ When he uncovered his face Mary noticed that it bore a calm, happy smile, and, without one other word, he laid his head on the block and awaited the end.

The executioner drew near with raised axe.

'Are you ready, sir?' he cried. 'Shall you rise again?'
And the serene smile grew brighter as, with firm voice, Sydney replied, 'Not till the general Resurrection. Strike on!'

CHAPTER XXXIII.

'LOVE IS LORD OF ALL.'

Passion grounded upon confession of excellence outlives hope For that same love for which God created and beautified the world, is the only means for us to return unto Him who is the fountain of our being; and through the imperfections of our natures being not able to see or comprehend His greatness and goodness, otherwise than by His works, must make us from visible things to raise our thoughts up to Him.

ALGERNON SYDNEY.

GRIFFITH had been moved to write a sermon that morning, and sat at the further end of the room with his ink-horn and papers; Bampffield read to himself, breaking off occasionally to stir the soup which was simmering over the fire, and Hugo, after a sleepless night, lay idly watching the two old men, though his thoughts were far away. Ah, had he but been free he might have been with his friend to the last, might have walked with him from his prison, might have stood beside him on the scaffold! He could never again serve him—nay, he had scarcely served him at all, for those weary months in the prison had been wasted so far as he was concerned, and now hope was over, injustice had triumphed, and his master was to be put to death—to be judicially murdered!

He turned his face from the light in silent anguish, in which he was, nevertheless, conscious of a certain relief in the quiet of the cell, a certain gratitude to his two companions for leaving him alone. But all at once the quiet was broken and his sorrow rudely invaded. An ill-conditioned prisoner named Matthew, whose duty it was to go round the prison distributing the daily dole of bread which was allowed to certain classes of prisoners, flung open the door, and, having set down his loaf on the wooden bench which served for table, crossed over to Hugo's bed.

'Well,' he exclaimed, with a horrible grin, as he rubbed his grimy hands, 'Mr. Sydney's d——d head is off.'

Bampffield, hastily interposing, tried in vain to check the man, but he went on unheeding.

‘Off at one blow, they say, except that the headsman had to finish off just a trifle of skin with his knife.’

At this, however, even Griffith was roused, and, stepping quickly forward, he took the fellow by the shoulders and turned him out of the cell.

‘Take thy vain prating hence!’ he said, with righteous indignation; then, with the anxiety of a doctor, turned to see how it fared with his patient.

He had long ago ceased to judge Hugo harshly; spite of himself, he had been won, and was now fain to admit that even a man who was familiar with Whitehall, a man who wore lace cravats and gay colours, might, after all, be not wholly a reprobate. But neither Dr. Griffith, with his good intentions, nor Francis Bampffield, with his saintly love and sympathy, could do much for their fellow-prisoner now. The horrible words had all too vividly called up before him the ghastly spectacle, had roused all those terrible thoughts of death which are most repugnant to human nature. Death had never before touched him nearly; he had almost died himself, it is true, but had been so worn out with pain of mind and body that he had hailed death as a deliverer. He could not do this in the case of his friend. Death was to him only the destroyer, the cruel, merciless, irresistible destroyer. The brutal words had quenched all higher thoughts, had brought before him only the material view, with its blood, and agony, and sickening details. He could only think of the eyes that had smiled on him—thus; the lips that had kissed him—thus; the hand that had clasped him—thus. He broke into passionate weeping, into an agony of sobbing, most dangerous in his present state, as both the watchers knew, yet neither the one nor the other could say one word to check him.

At length, to their inexpressible relief, the door was unlocked, and Scroop admitted Sir William Denham and Mary. Instinctively the three men drew together, talking in low voices of the event of the day, and leaving to the woman the difficult—the almost impossible—task which had baffled them.

She sat down beside the bed, making him aware of her presence, but without speaking. Then after a while, when she thought that, from sheer exhaustion, his sobs were less violent, and that he might listen to her voice, she said, quietly and distinctly,

'It was not like Death, Hugo, it was like a triumph.'

With a strong effort he controlled himself, and, still with averted face, he asked,

'Who told you of it?'

'I was there,' she answered, quietly; 'there all the time.'

'You were there!' he exclaimed, turning towards her, and, in his astonishment, forgetting for the moment all else.

Was he shocked? Mary wondered. Did he think she had done an unwomanly thing? Did he shrink from a girl who could voluntarily go to see an execution? A faint colour came into her face, her eyes filled. She said falteringly, and as if in excuse, words which she had never meant to say.

'It was for you I went.'

He caught her hand in his and pressed it to his lips. But he did not thank her; she was glad that he did not in words.

'Tell me,' he said, after a silence—'tell me all.'

'There can have been very little pain,' she said, allowing Hugo still to hold her hand in his. 'It was all over so quickly, and even the smile on his face was there afterwards. There was such a hush all through the crowd, and not one soul stirred; all the folk standing by weeping quietly, while Ducasse and the other servant laid his body reverently in the coffin, and then bore it down to a coach which was in waiting to take it to Penshurst. He wished much to be buried in Penshurst, they say; for he loved the place only the more that he had been so long exiled from it. But, Hugo, I cannot think of him as lying there dead. I think of him as he looked just as he ascended the scaffold. When he first came in sight, looking so indifferent, so composed, I thought how like he must be to his favourite hero, Marcus Brutus. But just as he mounted the stairs he paused and looked up with a look on his face that I can never describe to you—a look I never saw on mortal face before, and it made me understand the words we sing in church,—

"The noble army of martyrs praise Thee.""

She paused, thinking that the rest had perhaps better wait for some other time. Hugo obediently took the wine which she held to his lips, but looked up presently with an eager entreaty.

'Talk on,' he said, pleadingly. 'Your voice comforts me.'

'Ducasse caught sight of me afterwards,' said Mary, yielding to his entreaty. 'And he came and spoke to me, poor fellow. Almost the last thing I had seen Colonel Sydney do

before he laid aside his hat and doublet was to place a paper in his man's hand and speak a few words to him, which I could not hear. And that paper, Hugo, was for you—Ducasse gave it me.'

She took from her pocket a letter, directed to Hugo in Sydney's large, bold handwriting. Hugo eagerly unfolded it, but the moment he tried to read his head swam, and he was forced to ask Mary to read it to him. The letter ran as follows :—

'MY DEAR FRIEND,

'I had well-nigh said my son, seeing that of late you have been to me as son to father. I have but a short time left to me in this world, and have many matters to order and arrange, but you shall stand second to none, and I will write you while yet time remains to me. And first, to thank you for your loving silence, for your firm constancy. I rejoice that your life is like to be spared, and that I can hope and pray—as I do most fervently—that you may be spared to work for the old cause when I am no more. You will have heard of my trial ere this. The Lord Chief Justice is said to have bragged unto the king that no man in his place had ever rendered unto any king of England such services as he had done in procuring my death. In truth, he over-ruled eight or ten very important points of law, and decided them without hearing, whereby the law itself was made a snare which no man could avoid, nor have any security for his life or fortune, if one vile wretch could be found to swear against him such circumstances as he required. God only knows what will be the issue of the like practice in these our days. Perhaps He will in mercy speedily visit His afflicted people. I die in the faith that He will do it, though I know not the time or ways.

'I believe that the people of God in England have, in these late years, generally grown faint. Some, through fear, have deflected from the integrity of their principles, some have too deeply plunged themselves in worldly cares, and, so they might enjoy their trades and wealth, have less regarded the treasure that is laid up in heaven. But I think there are very many who have kept their garments unspotted ; and I hope that God will deliver them and the nation for their sakes. God will not suffer this land, where the Gospel hath of late flourished more than in any part of the world, to become a slave of the world ; He will not suffer it to be made a land of graven images. He will stir up witnesses of the Truth, and, in His own time,

spirit His people to stand up for His cause, and deliver them. I lived in this belief, and am now about to die in it. I know that my Redeemer lives; and, as He hath in a great measure upheld me in the day of my calamity, hope that He will still uphold me by His Spirit in this last moment, and give me grace to glorify Him in my death.

'For in truth, Hugo, I hold it a great honour that God hath permitted me to be singled out as a witness of His truth, and even by the confession of my opposers for that good old cause in which I was from my youth engaged, and for which God hath often and wonderfully declared Himself.

'Farewell, dear lad; keep a brave heart in your prison, make the spirit triumph over the flesh, and may God grant you at length your liberty, that you may the better serve Him. Whatever betide—whether in prison or at large—keep the words of our motto graven on your heart, "*Sanctus amor patriæ dat animum.*"

'Your most faithful friend,
'AL. SYDNEY.'

When the letter was ended Mary once more told him everything that had passed that morning, describing all simply and truthfully, so that he knew she kept nothing back from him, and was satisfied. The violence of his grief was over; he was quite calm now, only unspeakably weary and sad.

'After all,' he said, just before Mary left him, 'I, too, may follow ere long. The scaffold is not the only way to death.'

'You forget,' she said, in a low voice—'you forget one who needs you, one who wearies for your coming. Do not speak of dying; you must live for Joyce.'

'You do not understand,' he said. 'That is all over. I have bid her to be free and to think of me no more. What right have I to blight her life—I, who must live for ever in this hellish Newgate?'

She would have replied, but at that moment Sir William drew near.

'My dear,' he said in his kindly voice, 'my dear, I do not wish to rob Hugo of his nurse, but you look to me over-wrought and weary; I think you had better come home.'

Hugo looked up; even his troubles had not made him very observant; now, for the first time, he looked searchingly in Mary's face. Her brilliant colour had faded, there were dark shadows below her eyes, effort was written upon her once serene brow, and exhaustion upon her pale lips. As Sir

William spoke her head drooped a little, but she made no remonstrance.

‘God bless you for what you have done!’ cried Hugo, and again he caught her hand in his; then, turning to Sir William, ‘She is the best of comforters—the best!’

Sir William was quite right. Mary was both over-wrought and exhausted. She was glad to go straight to bed on reaching home, and to escape any further conversation about Sydney’s death or Hugo’s convalescence. But darkness and solitude brought her no rest, but instead the most horrible temptation of her whole life. Hugo no longer considered himself betrothed to Joyce Wharnccliffe; he had told her so with his own lips—had told her that he would on no account hold Joyce to a promise which would blight her life. And then, just after that, he had held her hand in his with a touch which yet lingered there, and had called her the best of comforters. Might she not win his love? It would not blight her life to love him, though he were imprisoned all his days; rather to be loved by him, and confessedly to love him, would be heaven itself.

And then her uncle’s words returned to her—the words which had caused her such burning blushes as they drove that first night to the prison—‘I would thou hadst been betrothed to him, then there could have been no handle for scandal-mongers in this visit.’ She wished he had never spoken those words, wished that they had not called up for her a double vision of sweet, sheltered, protected peace, and of solitary, hard exposure to all the bitter blasts which in this evil world were like to blow on her. And to love him in his dreary imprisonment, to love him even without any hope but that of bringing a ray of comfort to him in that wretched cell, what more could heart of woman crave?

No one who truly loved him could think otherwise. What! were mere prison walls to blight love? A fig for such love as that! True love would scorn so trumpery a separation, would gladly wait through years upon years with no other privilege than that of loving and being loved.

‘And thus would Joyce speak,’ said a voice in her heart.

That voice made her shudder, it was the conscience or consciousness of right once more claiming its dominion over her; she burst into an agony of tears, passionately sobbing in the darkness words which until now had never escaped her lips,—‘I love him! I love him! My God, I love him!’

The reaction from the horrors of the morning, the exhaustion

which naturally followed such a strain, the recollection of Hugo's words, the mingled weariness and excitement, all were against her. Yet because her love was pure, because her love was true she was saved. She did in very truth love Hugo, therefore the thought of his happiness was ever paramount, her own altogether secondary. He loved Joyce Wharncliffe, and Joyce loved him—then she would move heaven and earth to end their sorrow and separation, she would keep Hugo from sinking into that dreary acquiescence with a cruel fate, an acquiescence to which his nature would inevitably incline. Oh, yes! she would serve them—would serve them. And with that her tears flowed more gently—she even smiled through them, and her old visions of Joyce came back to her, and she chid herself for having allowed them to fade.

The next day things favoured her plans. Griffith went out to walk in the paved passage to which they were allowed access, and Francis Bampffield, who for some time past had been in failing health, lay asleep on his bed, leaving her to what was practically a *tête-à-tête* with Hugo.

'Will you give me leave to speak to you plainly, Hugo?' she asked; 'as old friend, sister, mentor?'

He looked up languidly. She resumed,

'Had I known what your letter to Mistress Wharncliffe contained I think I should have refused to give it to the post.'

'Do not speak of it,' he said, turning away with a gesture of pain. 'Twas hard enough to do, but 'tis done now. Did I not tell you yesternight that I would suffer anything rather than blight her life?'

'That is how you men-folk talk,' said Mary, quickly. 'But believe me, Hugo, you are mistaken. Lives are not so easily blighted. Trust me, we women are stronger than you think for, ay, and braver and more patient. Mistress Wharncliffe loves you. Do you believe that any woman who truly loves a man would not rather be a maid all her life for love of him, than be what you call free? Free! in good sooth I know not what you mean by free! Would you so wrong her as to think that, while you for her father's sake lie here in jail, she would go wed some other? You wrong our sex an you can dream of such a thing.'

Hugo was silent; this was altogether a new view of the case, a view which certainly would never have occurred to him. Yet it had a sound of truth in it. But again the thought of the years of suspense and waiting and sorrow for Joyce rose before him. He turned away with a groan.

'I would I had never told her of my love.'

Mary was silent for a minute. When she could trust herself to speak she said, in a low voice—

'I don't know Mistress Wharncliffe, yet I think that she would never agree to such a sentence as that. Have you not given her the right openly, confessedly, to love you? Have you not given her the best gift a man can give? And as the thought of her love brings comfort to you in this gruesome jail, so doth your love bring comfort to her at Mondisfield.'

'I do not see it,' he groaned; 'I can do naught for her, naught! My love comfort her, forsooth! How should it comfort her?'

Her eyes swam with tears which would no longer be restrained. Hastily rising, she made a pretence of stirring the sea-coal fire.

'You foolish lad!' she exclaimed, taking good care not to turn her face towards him as she spoke, 'you foolish lad! Why, to know that she has your love will be comfort enow. To know that you live for her, keep brave and patient for her, to know that you think of her, dream of her, pray for her, hope for her. To know that by your silence you protect her, by your noble suffering shield her, by your heart's deep love delight to do all this—what more could woman desire? Is not that comfort? Would barren, painless peace without you have been better?'

He was silent. Mary returned to her former place.

'There, you gave me leave to play the scold,' she said, smiling. 'And now I will forbear; nay, I will confess what I know to be the truth, that where you have one fault, I have a hundred.'

'One!' said Hugo, with a look of amusement. 'Which?'

'You acquiesce too readily in suffering, you patiently endure when you ought to resist, you are resigned where you ought to hope against hope. Make me a present of your quiet resignation, Hugo; for, in truth, I could very well do with it. Call back the goddess of Hope, and bid her drive away your despondency, and throw her rainbow arch over the future you paint so black.'

'For what would you have me hope?'

'For freedom—for Joyce!'

'I have no reasonable ground to look for aught but life-long imprisonment.'

'Perhaps not. I am only a woman and ignorant. But look

you, kings have been known to relent. Moreover, prisoners have often been pardoned by succeeding monarchs, and the king and the Duke of York are both of them past middle-age, while you are but twenty. Also,'—she lowered her voice to a whisper—'prisoners sometimes escape. There, I am weary; scolding is hard work. And, since Thomas is waiting for me, I will go home. Farewell. Think of what I have said.'

He did think. What else was there left for him to do? He escaped from bodily and mental pain, and once more allowed tender thoughts of the past, eager hopes for the future to cheer his present dreariness. His happy, free life returned to him once more—he dared to live through that magic time, the last days of his youth, as it had proved, from the October when he had first seen Joyce to the midsummer when all had been ended in Newgate. Those golden months when he had hoped with a delicious, vague hope, had feared with a half-hopeful, half-happy fear. Once more he talked with the little Duchess of Grafton, once more he half confessed to Mary his hopes and fears with regard to Joyce, once more he roamed through the stately old rooms of Penshurst, ever in company with his master and friend, once more he was at Mondisfield telling Joyce of his love in the north parlour. And it was no longer all pain, that looking back, for Mary's words had done their work.

For her there had been tears and grief, but all the time the sun of love shining; and thus she had brought hope's rainbow into the life of another.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE DUCHESS OF GRAFTON.

In all thy need be thou possest
Still with a well-prepared breast ;
Nor let the shackles make thee sad ;
Thou canst but have what others had.
And this for comfort thou must know :
Times that are ill won't still be so ;
Clouds will not ever pour down rain,
A sullen day will clear again ;
First peals of thunder we must hear,
Then lutes and harps shall strike the ear.—HERRICK.

THAT afternoon Mary went to visit the little duchess, who, married in her babyhood, was now, at the age of sixteen, a mother. The grand bed-chamber, with its magnificent fittings and furnishings, was a strange contrast to the Newgate cell where lay her other friend, and the contrast struck Mary somewhat painfully as she was ushered in by a pompous old nurse ; but, when the silken bed-curtains were drawn back, she forgot the contrast in the pleasure of once more seeing her friend.

The little Duchess of Grafton looked sweeter than ever in her lying-in cap and dainty, lace-trimmed robe ; she was pale as a lily, but seemed bright and well, and with already the soft tender light of maternity in her eyes. The tiny, red-faced baby was nestled close to her ; she kept stroking his dark, downy head as she talked.

‘I have been looking for you this age, Mary!’ she exclaimed. ‘Do you know that I began to receive visitors on the twenty-sixth of last month ? And you, my closest friend, put me off with the 8th of December.’

‘I would have come,’ said Mary, ‘but indeed my aunt advised not, and said you would be overdone with seeing so many. And, moreover, we have had much to occupy us of late. Mr. Evelyn told me he had seen you and the babe. What a bonny wee man he is.’

‘Is he not ?’ said the little mother, raising herself on her elbow that she might better display her first-born. ‘Yes, Mr. Evelyn saw him the first of all, and is so much in love that he is coming again to-day. I hear he has taken a house in London for the winter. That is good hearing.’

'Yes, he has taken a house in Villiers Street, and so is a near neighbour. He is come chiefly the better to educate his daughters. Mr. Evelyn thinks much of education.'

'Ay,' said the little duchess, laughing; 'he and I have already discussed my babe's future. Have we not, my bonny Charlie?'

'Is he to be Charles?'

'After his grandfather. But you are not to be like his Majesty, for all that, my son. No, no, we know better, you and I. There! take him, Mary, before I talk any more treason to him. You cannot see him under this dark canopy.'

Mary sat nursing the babe, and ere long in came the old nurse with the caudle-cup and the cake-basket.

'There, now you must do your duty,' said the little duchess, laughing. 'For my part, I affect the cake, but not the caudle; and that tyrant nurse will never let me have all I should like. Your mother is a *gourmande*, my wee Charlie, an outrageous *gourmande*. She must mend her ways ere you come to years of discretion.'

'The caudle is good for your grace,' said the old nurse, sententiously. 'Good wine, good bread, good spices and sugar will hearten up your grace, and bring the colour back to your cheeks. But cakes, there be naught that is wholesome in cakes.'

'Good flour, good spices and sugar,' retorted the duchess, laughing. 'But there, 'tis ever the same, is it not, Mary? What we best like, that is not for our good; what we shrink from, that is ever the one thing needful. Who would have thought so much philosophy was to be found in my old nurse, with her cakes and caudle! And now,' said the duchess, growing grave once more, as the nurse withdrew from the apartment, 'and now, Mary, tell me of all that hath happened. Do not fear. The rumour of all the horrors hath penetrated even this quiet room. Oh, never think that I have forgot you all, that I have been selfish and heedless in this luxury of illness. I have prayed for you, and for them; only for the sake of my babe I dared not hear too much, dared not ask too many questions.'

'Dear, do not ask them now,' said Mary, quietly. 'Of what avail is it that you should know what could only make you sorrowful?'

'They told me, or rather I heard of Colonel Sydney's death. I knew it was to be the seventh. Some visitor mentioned it to my father, forgetting perchance that I lay behind these

curtains, and might possibly care that a brave man was to be done to death. Yet I am glad too that I knew; for as the hour drew near, I lay here and prayed for him. Tell me, how died he?’

‘Like one of the noble army of martyrs,’ said Mary.

‘And Hugo Wharncliffe yet lives?’

‘He yet lives, and is like to live.’

‘Oh, it is terrible to me to think of him,’ said the little duchess, keeping back her tears with difficulty. ‘It seems to me worse than Colonel Sydney’s case, for he at least is at rest, and his pain must have been sharp and short, but the other—such a long torture; and to be made thus a public spectacle! When I think of him as he was at Whitehall but a few months since—when I remember him at the Gray’s Inn masque so bravely clad, so happy, I could weep my heart out.’

‘They say the king would fain have saved him,’ said Mary. ‘Do you think he would ever be induced to set him at liberty?’

‘I cannot tell, he changes so; he is not what he once was, kind and gracious; now he is oftentimes heavy and sullen, no one knows how to take him.’

‘They say he is ill, that this humour in his leg affects him more than was at first thought for. But you, he is fond of you, he might hearken to you.’

‘What! you think I might plead for Mr. Wharncliffe? I would do so most gladly. Oh! do you really think he would hearken to me? Perhaps now—now that I have brought him a grandson and a namesake. Oh, little son! we will put it all upon you! You shall rescue Mr. Wharncliffe from Newgate! You shall be a deliverer while yet in swaddling clothes. And here in good time comes Mr. Evelyn. We will consult with him.’

There entered an elderly man, quietly but richly dressed in dark purple; his face was delightful, the brow high and intellectual, the features refined, the expression thoughtful but not abstracted, the eyes kind and gentle, yet keenly observant. The little duchess had chosen her adviser well. Mr. Evelyn was before all things a man to be consulted. He thought well of their plan, and spoke hopefully of Hugo’s release.

‘They tell me young Mr. Wharncliffe was intimate with Colonel Sydney, and this had much to do with the severity of his sentence.’

‘Yes,’ said Mary. ‘He knew Mr. Sydney well, and revered him greatly. He is half heart-broken now, for,

like all the rest of the world, the sentence was a surprise to him.'

'Sir George Jeffreys hath much to answer for,' said Mr. Evelyn, gravely. 'It was an ill day for England when he was promoted. But a day or two since I met with him at a wedding—the wedding of jolly Mrs. Castle, of whom no doubt you have heard.'

'What, the lady that hath had five husbands? Was Sir George Jeffreys there?'

'Ay, he was there, and the Lord Mayor and the sheriff too, besides many aldermen and persons of quality. Jeffreys danced with the bride and spent the night till eleven of the clock drinking healths, taking tobacco, and talking, to my mind, much beneath the gravity of a judge, who but a day or two before condemned Mr. Algernon Sydney.'

Mary treasured this up to tell Hugo, who, in his bitterness of soul, was beginning to think that justice and mercy were qualities which existed in no other Tory save Sir William Denham. Mr. Evelyn was no partisan, he was too broad-minded, too gentle for that, but he was emphatically a Tory, refined, cultured, scientific, and, in so far as science went, progressive; but in political matters he had always been, and always would be, opposed to all change.

'You think he was unjustly condemned?' asked the little duchess, wistfully.

'Most assuredly,' said Mr. Evelyn. 'For he was condemned on the single witness of that monster of a man, Lord Howard of Eserick, and some sheets of paper taken in Mr. Sydney's study, pretended to be written by him but not fully proved, nor the time when, but appearing to have been written before his Majesty's restoration, and thus pardoned by the Act of Oblivion.'

'I suppose every one knows that Mr. Sydney was averse to government by a king?' said Mary, wishing to elicit more from Mr. Evelyn.

'Quite true, and he had been an inveterate enemy to our blessed martyr; nathless, he had hard measure. Sydney was a man of great courage, great sense, great parts. He showed that both at his trial and his death. Methought there was something very fine in the way he told the people he came not there to talk but to die. However, we must not discourse of executions in this room, 'tis not fitting. Train up your son to be loyal to his sovereign, my dear little friend, and pray God to keep him from being involved in wild schemes for reform.'

‘I am scheming already to make him a reformer, or rather a deliverer,’ said the duchess, laughing. ‘You are to fascinate his Majesty at your christening, my son, and then I will plead with him for young Mr. Wharncliffe.’

But alas, the pleading was of no avail. The little duchess did her best, but she failed completely. The king protested that he had done all he could for Mr. Hugo Wharncliffe, that he had obstinately rejected all offers of help, and that now he must be left to his fate. It would be impossible for the king to pardon him after certain words that had passed between them at their last interview.

‘Would you have me deal more leniently with him than with my son?’ he asked, his brow darkening. ‘No, no, my love, I am sorry to refuse you aught on this gala day, but recall to mind the French proverb, *Comme on fait son lit on se couche*. I offered Hugo Wharncliffe a post at Whitehall, he chose to stay in Newgate. What would you then? Am I to blame?’

So Hugo stayed in Newgate, and, thanks to the care and solicitude of the Denhams, slowly recovered his health and spirits. He was after all young and full of life; even the cruel cold which now set in did not retard his convalescence—he suffered severely from it, but it did him little harm. With Francis Bampfield it was otherwise. As the younger man grew stronger, the elder grew weaker. It was quite right, he said, quite natural; he had fought a good fight, and had well-nigh finished his course.

Rupert Denham had felt himself to be out of place during Hugo’s illness, and after that first night had not returned to Newgate, but had left his friend to the care of Sir William, Mary, and old Jeremiah. Illness and sorrow were so foreign to his nature that perhaps he did well to keep aloof; but when Hugo recovered he made a point of going often to the prison and doing his best to enliven him. His first visit was in January, and Scroop, always pleased to usher in visitors to see the one prisoner whose welfare he had at heart, grinned broadly as he showed into the dreary-looking cell this incongruous gallant in his feathers and furbelows. Griffith was aghast at his swaggering gait and jovial, hearty manner.

He embraced his friend with much affection and many oaths; then, turning to the two old men, he bowed courteously.

‘Good-morrow, Mr. Bampfield; good-morrow, good Dr. Griffith; I hope I see you both well. Why, by the powers! you have made another man of my friend here. Hugo, the

gods must have given you the hide of a rhinoceros, and the strength of a Hercules, to have recovered so speedily. Here, jailer! bring us some wine, we must drink to my good friend's health. They tell me you have a full cellar in this grim hole, and that Bacchus smiles kindly on the wan prisoner if he doth but show him the glint of gold. Come, bring us your best.'

Griffith, aghast at this unseemly merriment, asked leave of Scroop to go forth for his daily exercise, and Hugo, much relieved to see him depart, gave himself up to the enjoyment of his friend's visit, only bidding him moderate his noise lest Bampfield should be disturbed.

'Nay,' said the old man, from the other side of the hearth, 'nay, you disturb me not. Enjoy your friend, my lad, and do not trouble about me.'

'A jolly old sinner, worth ten of the other with his vinegar face!' exclaimed Rupert, in an audible aside. 'Sir, we drink to your health. Long life and prosperity to Mr. Francis Bampfield.'

'I thank you for the toast, gentlemen,' said Bampfield, smiling kindly on them. ''Twas courteously meant. Yet I do not desire either the one or the other. I am content to be without what men call prosperity, preferring to be the Lord's free prisoner. And as to long life, why, your friend will tell you it is scarce to be wished for in this cell.'

'In truth we have suffered much since this cold,' said Hugo. 'Scroop tells me prisoners die by scores in the other wards. We are lapped in luxury here, yet the cold is so intense that our breath freezes on the pillow, and we almost forget what warmth means.'

'Ah! if you were but free, what times we would have!' exclaimed Denham, with a sigh. 'The Thames is frozen—did they tell you? A fresh town is springing up in mid-river, streets of booths, folks walking or skating in all parts, coaches plying up and down from Westminster to the Temple, and all London turned out to see the fun. It is a carnival, I tell you! By St. Kit, I would give the world for you to be there to see! Oxen roasted whole, bull-baiting, horse-races, puppet-plays, and gewgaws and vendors enough for a Bartholomew fair. See here, I had my name printed right in mid-stream, for some wily craftsman hath set up a printing-press there, which takes mighty well and brings in much custom.'

He took from his pocket a neatly-printed card, with a treble border, and the words—

*'Mr. Rupert Denham,
Printed on the River of Thames being frozen,
In the 36th year of King Charles II.,
24th January, 1684.'*

Hugo was eager to hear all the news; even to look at Denham's jolly face cheered him. At length, with something of an effort, he stemmed the tide of his merriment and asked the question that was most at his heart.

'My brother,—have you seen him?'

'Ay, I saw him not long since,' said Denham, frowning.

'And you spoke with him?'

'I!' exclaimed Denham, wrathfully. 'Odds fish, my dear fellow, I would sooner be hanged! Speak to him, i' faith! Why, I would not so much as touch my beaver to him in the street!'

Hugo was silent for a minute.

'Where did you see him?' he asked at length.

'At the Temple church.' Then, as Hugo looked surprised, 'Oh, all the world and his wife was there; 'twas no ordinary day, it was to hear the rival organs played, and to be present at the final decision.'

'Ah! hath that at length been done?' said Hugo, much interested.

He had watched the rival organ-builders, Father Smith and Renatus Harris, for many months; each had built an organ in different parts of the Temple church, and the finest organ was to be retained; they both proved, however, so perfect that the decision was a most difficult one, and the builders went on challenging each other, and adding new stops to each organ, until it seemed that the choice would never be made.

'And how hath it ended?' asked Hugo eagerly.

'Well, Dr. Tudway came and performed on Father Smith's instrument, and Lulli on the other, and all the world came to hearken; and who do you think they choose to judge betwixt the two?—why, that beast, that fiend, that devil incarnate, Jeffreys!'

'I am sorry he had a hand in it,' said Hugo. 'To which builder did he award the palm?'

'To Father Smith; but they say the other organ hath suffered nothing in reputation, for the choice hath baffled better judges than Jeffreys.'

'And Randolph,' returned Hugo, 'did he look well?'

'I don't know,' said Rupert. 'He had been drinking, and

seemed in very jovial mood. There, don't speak of him ; it makes my gorge rise. Pardon me, I know he was your brother once, but methinks, now he hath disowned you, you might give me leave to rail at him.'

'I have not disowned him,' said Hugo, quietly ; 'therefore, let us say no more on that point.'

Denham bottled up his wrath till he was out of Newgate ; but then, finding it no longer controllable, joined a band of scourers, and spent the evening in wrenching off door-knockers, assaulting defenceless shop-signs, frightening the chapmen into fits, and hustling everything that was capable of being hustled. Seeing Randolph Wharnccliffe and his villainy in all these innocent objects, he at length worked off his indignation, and returned to Norfolk Street by and by, fairly well content with his day's work.

CHAPTER XXXV.

FRANCIS BAMPFIELD, SAINT.

Come, gentle death ! the ebb of care,
The ebb of care, the flood of life ;
The flood of life, the joyful fare ;
The joyful fare, the end of strife ;
The end of strife, that thing wish I,
Wherefore come death, and let me die.

Anon. 1557.

ALL was very quiet in the Newgate cell. It was night. Griffith slept and forgot the cold, but a rushlight dimly revealed two wakeful figures. Bampfield lay on a mattress close to the fire, and Hugo sat beside him, or rather crouched beside him, for the cold was excruciating, and made him shiver from head to foot. He had piled almost all the wraps at his disposal on the dying man, and, when Bampfield remonstrated, made light of it.

'After two months of this weather, I am acclimatised,' he said, smiling. 'Your age and infirmity make you feel the cold more.'

'Nay, dear lad,' said the old man ; ''tis not my age makes me cold, 'tis the beginning of death. I shall never be warm again—never again. Tell me, what day is it ?'

'I heard St. Sepulchre's bell ring twelve but a few minutes since,' replied Hugo. 'It must be the 16th of February.'

He had to think a little, to calculate those weary days of the month; for time was monotonous in Newgate, and there was little to note its slow flight. Nay, the word flight was a mockery, time crept.

'This will be my last day of earth,' said Bampfield, smiling. 'Do not look so startled, so shocked. I am dying, but, if you loved me, you would rejoice. Feel my feet, they are cold as stone; feel my pulse, it waxes feeble. Christ means to call one of His under-shepherds home to Him this day to render his account.'

Hugo looked at the worn, sunken face, with its dark shadows. He saw that Bampfield was right. A great change had come over the features that had grown so dear to him. He covered his face with his hands and wept.

'I have been more of a care than a comfort to you of late,' said Bampfield, feebly. 'More of a care than a comfort, lad. Yet mayhap you will miss me the more for that. I think you will miss the old man. But, dear lad, do not grudge me my release. For I am weary, weary, and heavy-laden.'

'Let me call Dr. Griffith,' said Hugo, dashing the tears from his eyes. 'Perchance he might ease you.'

'Nay, wake him not,' said Bampfield; 'he watched beside me last night, and is weary. Besides, he could do naught. Hugo, it seems to me something strange that, after years and years of imprisonment for preaching the gospel, I at length die in jail, not for the crime of preaching, but for refusing to take an oath. A strange crime, methinks.'

'If you could but have done so with a good conscience!' said Hugo, who never had been able to understand the old man's difficulty.

'But I could not,' said Bampfield. 'For see here! I do not only bind my soul to obey the king that now is, but his heirs and successors also. And I know not what his successor may be; for aught I know he may be a Popish successor. Neither can I swear to obey laws not yet in being, nor to be obedient to a Papist. Therefore, as things now are, it is impossible for me to take the oath of allegiance. Come life, come death, the Lord assisting me, I will never take it.'

'Tis true Christ saith, "Swear not at all,"' said Hugo, musingly, 'and bade men give but a plain yes or no.'

'Ay, dear lad,' said Bampfield, his face lighting up, 'and methinks I see a day, far distant as yet, when His rule shall

be obeyed in this land that calls itself His, but keeps not His word. Oh! those university oaths! so many and so oft multiplied by inconsiderate students! How much guilt has been contracted thereby!’

‘You die, then, as the proto-martyr in this cause. You die protesting against taking of oaths.’

Bampfield smiled.

‘I have trudged along through evil report and through good report, and, through the help of Christ, I trust I may be His servant and witness to the death. There is one last thing I would ask you.’

‘Ask anything,’ said Hugo, ‘and, if it only lie in my power, I will do it.’

‘Nay, I know not how that will be,’ said Bampfield, tenderly. ‘I would in no way force thy conscience. Didst ever take the sacrament, lad?’

‘Once only,’ said Hugo, his thoughts flying away from the dark prison to the sunny church at Mondisfield.

‘Will you take it once more with me before I leave you? When the sun is risen, we will waken Dr. Griffith and make ready.’

But Hugo hesitated.

‘He would not think me fit,’ he faltered.

‘When did the Saviour of mankind ever wait for men to be fit for Him?’ said Bampfield, earnestly. ‘“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power.”’

‘But Dr. Griffith will object,’ said Hugo.

He had meant Griffith all along, but was too reserved to say so.

And he was right. Griffith did object. Hugo was not of their communion; he had made no special profession of devout feeling all these months, had not added his testimony to the testimony of the saints, had not altogether lost the polite art, as it was then considered, of swearing, and, worst of all, had not hesitated to drink with that most noisy and boisterous Templar, Rupert Denham. But the dying man overruled all these objections with one gentle sentence.

‘’Tis my last wish,’ he said, faintly. ‘And in truth, good Griffith, I was always for Christ’s open house-keeping, since I had inner acquaintance with Him.’

And so when the sun rose the three drew together, forgetting their differences; and when the brief, solemn service was over, Bampfield bade Hugo rest.

'You can do no more for me, dear lad,' he said, clasping his hand closely. 'I have no other wants. For here in Newgate prison my Lord is with me to the full satisfaction of my whole man.'

They were the last words Hugo ever heard him speak. For when, some hours later, he awoke from sound and dreamless sleep, and looked hastily around, he saw that the death-angel had visited the cell. The sunshine of that Saturday morning streamed in through the prison grating, and fell full upon the peaceful face, the face from which Death's gentle hand had smoothed the lines and furrows, leaving only the radiant smile with which Christ's 'under-shepherd' had greeted the dawning Sabbath.

Bampfied had passed into the Unseen, where there will be no dispute as to whether the Lord's-Day should be kept on the Saturday or the Sunday, since Rest-days will be merged in the eternal 'Work without weariness,' which is true rest.

How infinitely little seemed now the disputes and controversies—but how priceless the patient endurance, the self-sacrifice, the willingness to suffer for what he had deemed the truth. Who could doubt that, while his worn-out body lay in the prison-cell, he himself had seen the King in His beauty,—had entered into the joy of his Lord?

They buried him in the presence of a vast crowd of on-lookers, in the burial-ground behind the Baptist Chapel in Glass House Yard, Goswell Street. But, although many mourned for him, none mourned so truly as his fellow-prisoners.

Hugo seemed unable to recover from this second blow, and in truth it seemed as if that spring he was to be brought into perpetual nearness to death. One day Thomas Delaune was brought to the cell, Scroop having assigned him Bampfied's vacant place. He came a broken-down, broken-hearted man. His babe was dead, his wife was dead, he himself looked as though his days were numbered, while little Tom, so bonny and rosy a few months before, was now a little ghost of a child, seldom complaining, seldom even speaking, but slowly and silently fading away. That cruel winter in Newgate had much to answer for.

The new-comers roused Hugo from his dull apathy. He listened to poor Delaune's complaints; he listened a hundred times to his favourite assertion that 'Newgate was a severe kind of logic, and would probably dispute him out of the world.' He listened to all the arguments of the luckless

pamphlet which had cost the writer so dear; and the poor, unhappy man learnt to love him and to lean on him, even though he showed a hopeless inaptitude for theological discussions.

Mary came often with her uncle to visit them, and she did her best for the little boy, who lingered on until the spring. The father, though refusing to let the child go, was too ill himself to attend to it; Mary did the nursing by day, and Hugo by night.

One morning Tom looked up languidly from the little bed which they had made for him.

‘I would like to see out of doors,’ he said, faintly.

‘Could you not hold him up to the window?’ said Mary.

‘I do not think the air could hurt him.’

And Hugo held him high up in his arms, so that the little fellow could peep out through the bars.

He saw the sun shining brightly, he saw the trees around Christ’s Hospital, and heard the sound of the boys at their play.

‘You said I couldn’t come too when you went to Die,’ he said, faintly, as they laid him once more in bed. ‘But I am going now. Die is better than prison; I dreamed in the night all about it, and there are green trees, and children that sing, and no bars between—no hard, cold bars.’

He glanced up at the window until, to his dazzled sight, the light overpowered the darkness, and where the grating had been was only a golden glory. Then, tired with the brightness, his eyes closed, and gradually unconsciousness crept over him, and thus death took him painlessly away from Newgate to the land where there are ‘no bars between.’

Delaune did not long survive his child. Father, mother, and the two poor little children all met their death because it was deemed a crime to put forth a pamphlet which stated the views of a Nonconformist. Truly the liberty of the press has not been secured to Englishmen without tears and blood.

At length Hugo was once more in solitary confinement. For Griffith, honest, worthy, narrow Dr. Griffith was pardoned, and once more took his place among free men. They parted in all kindness, and Hugo’s congratulations were quite sincere. But although, had they lived together for years, they could never have been friends, he missed the old doctor sorely. Solitude was terrible, even when for part of the day Jeremiah was allowed to be with him, and his friends to visit him. But he had that wretched feeling of being left behind which

is of all things most dreary. The king had pardoned Griffith, but he would not pardon him, and even Death, who had released all the others, refused to come to his aid. In vain Mary and Rupert did their best to keep up his spirits. His attacks of ague returned, he lost hope, enduring indeed bravely and patiently, but no longer dreaming of escape, of liberty, and of Joyce.

One day Mary, returning home, fairly burst into tears.

‘He will die, aunt,’ she sobbed; ‘he will die if he stays there much longer. Oh! what can be done? How may we save him?’

‘My dear niece, I see no way of saving him,’ said Lady Denham, sadly. ‘We can but do our best to lighten his imprisonment.’

That evening they went to the theatre. The play was *Romeo and Juliet*, the last that Mary would have chosen to witness; but, although sad-hearted and weary, she would not stay at home, for it was against her own rule to allow her attendance on Hugo in any way to interfere with her home life. She still went with her aunt to receptions and balls, she danced and talked, despite her heavy heart, and lived down the gossip which inevitably arose about her friendship for young Mr. Wharnccliffe. She felt herself the custodian of his honour, and this gave her strength to meet banter with indifference, teasing with a smile, and searching questions about Hugo with never a blush. To have shut herself up at home would have been to give rise to scandal; she bravely went into society almost every evening, as much for Hugo’s sake as she went to Newgate in the morning.

Suddenly, as the play passed before her tired eyes, a thought flashed into her mind. The Friar was speaking with Juliet, and something in his manner startled her into sudden attention, though she had not noted what had passed just before.

‘Hold, daughter; I do spy a kind of hope,
Which craves as desperate an execution
As that is desperate which we would prevent.’

She had never read or seen this play before; Shakespeare was emphatically not the poet of the Restoration, and his plays were but seldom acted. Breathlessly she watched the gift of the magic vial, the contents of which were to make Juliet look as one dead. Eagerly she looked at the fair corpse as it was carried forth to the grave. After all it was not so hard to counterfeit death. And death might be the deliverer.

Death apparently was the only deliverer from Newgate. All that night she lay awake in a fever of excitement as gradually the details of the escape shaped themselves more and more clearly in her mind. The next morning she went straight to her uncle, for without his co-operation she saw that nothing could be done, but she went hopefully, for she knew that he had always refused to see any political principle involved in Hugo's imprisonment, she knew that he was extremely fond of him, and would sacrifice almost anything to save him. The uncle and niece were closeted together for more than an hour. Later in the day they went together to Newgate.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HOPES AND FEARS.

I'll be as patient as a gentle stream,
And make a pastime of each weary step,
Till the last step have brought me to my love :
And there I'll rest, as after much turmoil,
A blessed soul doth in Elysium.—SHAKESPERE.

‘You have been growing ever less hopeful of late,’ said Mary, reproachfully.

‘For what can I hope?’ said Hugo, wearily. ‘To dream of escape is idle, every day I grow weaker. Do you know that it has come to this, I can no longer climb up to the grating. The men who saw their way through iron, and gnaw their way through stone, are men strong of limb, sinewy and vigorous, they have not been weakened by torture, and starvation, and damp and cold ; they are not liable to be overtaken every other day by the ague, or if so, then they must be men of tougher nature. It is useless to talk to me of escape. There is only one deliverer from Newgate, and he comes to all prisoners sooner or later, therefore he must some day come to me.’

There was unusual bitterness in his tone. He knew that he was losing strength rapidly, and the consciousness humiliated him.

‘Indeed,’ said Mary, ‘it doth seem that death is the only deliverer. Have there been many deaths lately?’

‘Yes, the hard winter has done its work, the young and the

old died in the frost, the others lingered longer, but Scroop tells me there are deaths daily in the common wards.'

'Then perhaps they are not very particular as to the disposal of the dead,' said Sir William.

'Nay, the great thing is to hustle forth the corpse that its space may be taken by some other wretch.'

'Scroop is friendly to you, I believe?'

'Yes, he hath ever been that. I don't know why.'

'Suppose you were to follow the fair Juliet's example,' said Sir William, 'do you think Scroop would, if admitted into the secret, put you himself into the coffin, and see that you were borne to my house?'

Hugo started to his feet with an exclamation of surprise and alarm, which was nevertheless tinged with a wild hope.

'Let us talk the matter over quietly,' said Sir William, lowering his voice. 'I see no reason why we should not try the plan, and bring it to a more successful issue than the good folks of Verona. The question is, do we do well to risk admitting Scroop to the secret? To ask his help is to betray ourselves.'

'Nothing can be done without him,' said Hugo. 'He is keen as any hawk, that is why the governor trusts him with so much. But yet I know not whether he would risk so much out of love for me. Why indeed should any one? why should you run so grave a danger for the sake of one not even of your own kin? Were I discovered, think how grave the results might be for yourself. Nay, I cannot permit it. You must not incur so great a risk for me.'

'Why, my dear boy, do you not know that but a few days since that vile Captain Clifford found friends willing to rescue him from the Fleet. If they were willing to run the risk for such an one, do you think we shall not be willing to do as much for you? And in good time here comes your jailer. We will withdraw, and you shall tell him as much as you think fit.'

Now the jailer had really learnt to love Hugo, and when, bit by bit, the plan of escape was intrusted to him, it was no bribe which made him consent to lend his help. He knew that, if he refused, Hugo would remain a few months longer in Newgate, and would then inevitably die. He saw no harm whatever in giving him a false certificate of death, nay, he rubbed his hands with delight at the prospect of a little plot within the jail, a little excitement in the midst of his dreary life of routine work. As to any drug, he said there was no

necessity for it whatever. No one would come to look at the prisoner. He should duly nail him up in his coffin, report his death to the governor, and have his body delivered to his friends.

When this was arranged, Sir William and old Jeremiah having joined them in the cell and discussed all the details with Scroop, it only remained to fix the time of the escape. Hugo, hardly able to stand, so great was his excitement, looked eagerly from one to the other, knowing that he must leave the day to them, and yet so eager to seize that very instant that he hardly knew how he should endure any delay. Breathlessly he listened to Sir William's thoughtful, cautious arguments, which, to his satisfaction, ended with the remark—

‘After all, delays are dangerous—the sooner a plot is carried through the less risk to it. When are you liable to your next attack of ague?’

‘This very day,’ groaned Hugo, who had forgotten his old enemy.

‘Nay, do not be disheartened, that will exactly serve our turn,’ said Sir William. ‘We shall let fall that you are not long for this world, Scroop will tell the governor there is no hope for you, which in truth will be the case an you stay here much longer. Then in the night you will die; next evening we shall send a coffin for your remains, with bearers who can be trusted; Jeremiah would naturally be one, my butler another, Rupert must be intrusted with our secret, so he might figure as a third, and I have no doubt Colonel Sydney's man Ducasse would be a willing and safe man for the fourth. How say you, Mr. Jailer, will that be well?’

‘Your honour could not have planned it better,’ said Scroop, taking grim delight in all the arrangements.

‘Well, then, do you second our efforts faithfully, and if all is brought to a happy issue, then come to my house this day se'night and I will give you twenty golden guineas.’

Scroop's little eyes twinkled. He loved gold. Nevertheless, he would have risked all only for Hugo's sake.

‘There's one thing more, sir,’ said the jailer, just as the visitors were preparing to leave. ‘The coffin, sir; you must measure Mr. Wharncliffe.’

Spite of themselves they all laughed, as Hugo lay down on the bed to be measured, whilst alive, for his coffin. Nor was the task easy, since they had no proper implements, and were only too well aware that any error now might prove the destruction of their hopes. In the end Mary sacrificed the

lace edging of her mantle, tore it off in long strips, and with infinite care took those dread measurements. Then, tremulously winding up the lace, she glanced round the little room which had grown so familiar to her. If all went well, this was the last time she should ever enter it. There was no denying that, spite of anxiety and sorrow, those months of attendance on Hugo had been very sweet; she knew now that they were over, she knew that he would have to fly the country, and that in all probability she should never look on him again. For a moment the tears rushed to her eyes, even in the fulfilment of her own scheme, and in the prospect of the consummation of her hopes;—after all, she was but a woman. But driving back her tears she looked at Hugo. There was new life in his face, new hope, eager and rapturous expectation. That look was her reward. She bore it with her all the day; having learnt to weep with those that wept, she now learnt to rejoice with those that rejoiced.

In the meantime Hugo, almost beside himself with the thought of all the possibilities of the next few hours, made such preparations as he could for the escape. There was very little to be done. He begged Jeremiah to see that his three beloved books were placed with him in the coffin, then restlessly pacing the cell began to discuss the future with the old man.

‘I shall have to leave London at once, Jerry,’ he said; ‘I shall have, of course, to leave England, but first I must down to Suffolk to Colonel Wharncliffe’s place. In the meantime what will become of you? How am I ever to reward all that you have done for me?’

‘By letting me be with you, lad,’ said Jeremiah; ‘I want no reward but that, and I have laid by enough to serve us both for a while.’

Hugo wrung his hand.

‘My dear old friend,’ he said, gratefully, ‘when once we are safe in Holland I will work for the two of us. See, Jerry: if you will indeed share my fortunes, how would it be if you went on to Harwich? then I will meet you there when I have kept my promise and seen Colonel Wharncliffe and—and his family.’

‘There is one thing we must have a care of,’ said Jeremiah, gravely. ‘No rumour of your death must reach Mr. Randolph, else mayhap he may be claiming your body for burial.’

Hugo shuddered.

‘I had not thought of that,’ he said. ‘And yet methinks

there is no fear. He hath disowned me in life, why should he claim me in death?’

No more was said just then, for ere long Hugo fell into a violent shivering fit, and was forced to go through all the weary stages of his fever, ever with the thought of his escape floating through his mind. Night drew on, Jeremiah was obliged to go, and he bent down and embraced his master as he heard the jailer unlock the door, the signal that his time was up.

‘For the last time, dear lad, the last time,’ he said, fervently. ‘God have you in his keeping.’

‘Last time!’ said a harsh voice behind him. ‘Why for the last time, pray?’

The old Cromwellian was not to be startled, though in mortal terror he rose quietly, and in the dimly-lighted cell turned to confront the speaker. He had made sure that it was Scroop who had unlocked the door. Scroop had always come to him before at that time; by what evil chance had some other come on this night of all others? He turned and confronted the governor of Newgate.

‘Come now, explain yourself, what is this about last time?’

‘Sir, yonder lies the explanation,’ said Jeremiah, waving his hand in the direction of the bed.

The governor bent down nearer to the patient and saw that he was in a raging fever; he touched the burning brow and recoiled.

‘’Tis but the ague,’ he said, carelessly. ‘An I remember right, the prisoner hath suffered from it this long time.’

‘He will not suffer much longer, the Lord be praised,’ said Jeremiah. ‘Oh, sir, for God’s sake let me be with my master this night. Load me with fetters, an you will, but let me be with him to the end.’

‘Damnation take your impudence!’ said the governor, harshly. ‘Do you think men are to be pampered like princes here in jail? Be off with you! The prisoner is no more dying than I am; he’ll outlive you, you grumbling greybeard, that I dare swear.’

Jeremiah said no more, but once more embraced the prisoner and went forth with bowed head.

Hugo was vaguely aware that the governor was present; he fancied that somehow their plans were in great danger, but his fevered brain had not seen the true bearings of the case, he did not know that Jeremiah had adroitly made the

most of his illness, and had really impressed the governor with the idea that he was dying.

Presently Scroop entered. Hugo was aware that he was talking to the governor. He began to tremble. Would the man betray them? What was this he was saying? Oh, that he were not in this distorting fever, which would not let him see or hear things as they really were!

'How now, Scroop, is this gentleman really dying? His man swears he'll not outlast the night. In that case, maybe we ought to let his brother have due notice. Methinks they would try to force evidence from him once more.'

'Oh, he'll outlast the night, sir,' said Scroop, confidently. 'I don't think there is any call to send at this hour.'

After that the governor went away, and Scroop, having placed some water beside the patient, followed him, locking and bolting the door with his usual noisiness.

It was a terrible night for Hugo, for when at length the fever-stage passed, he was left to an agony of fear and apprehension, vaguely remembering scraps of the conversation that had passed in the cell, and seeing as he had never seen before the thousand risks which lay before him.

Had Scroop been faithful? He could not feel sure. Had the governor suspected aught? He could not tell. Would they indeed send word to Randolph? And would his brother claim his body, and perhaps bury it before the others could interfere? Horrible visions rose before him in the darkness. He was buried alive; he was discovered before the coffin was nailed down, and all his friends suffered for their attempts to help him. He was permitted to escape, but was overtaken on the Newmarket Road by Randolph. Or again, all was checked at the outset, and he remained in that cell, deserted by all men, until he was old and grey-headed.

His brain reeled, he groaned aloud in the anguish of his imaginings. And then in the dark cell there came to him the echoes of a woman's voice, the voice which day by day had spoken words of comfort to him. He remembered how once before in despair those words had come to his aid, 'Bid Hope throw her rainbow arch over the future you paint so black.'

It was as if an angel had bid him be of good cheer. He turned from the thoughts of terror and darkness, and thought of Joyce. Once more that vision rose before him of Joyce beneath the elm-trees at the gate, waiting to bid some one welcome. He had said in his letter that she welcomed her father; what if instead it was her lover for whom she waited!

His very rapture made him calm, for how much—how much depended on his self-control, on his wisdom! Conscious of this, he fell on his knees and prayed in the words of that collect which was most familiar to him, for the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful.

A few minutes later, he was sleeping peacefully, and for the last time the moonlight streamed in through the grated window and lit up his quiet face. Just so had it fallen months before upon him on the night of his first admission to Newgate. Then Bampffield had knelt beside him and prayed; perchance even now he did the same unseen; perchance he was able to see that there was no need, since the proof that his prayers had been answered lay in the wonderful change which in these months had passed over the face of the sleeper.

‘Very well,’ said Scroop, cheerfully, as he entered the cell next morning. ‘You are now dead, sir. As good luck will have it, the governor will be out till evening. I shall mention to him just as he leaves that you are dead, and that your friends have begged your body for burial. No one can now enter the cell but me; you have nothing to fear, but have only to keep quiet. I have brought you what food I was able to bring without being observed, for the daily dole will not be brought to a corpse.’

‘All lies now in your hands,’ said Hugo, anxiously. ‘But there, I trust you, Scroop—I have good reason to trust you.’

The jailer gave an inscrutable smile, and went away without another word, locking the door behind him. He went straight to the governor’s house. That worthy had business at Edmon-ton, and was just preparing to ride thither.

‘How now, Scroop, I cannot see to business,’ he exclaimed. ‘Confound you! can’t you see I’m starting on a journey?’

‘’Tis naught, your honour,’ said Scroop, deferentially. ‘I will not detain your honour. I did but just bring you word that young Mr. Wharncliffe is dead. He must have died i’ the night, sir; for this morning, going into his cell as usual, I found him cold as any stone. ’Tis passing strange, for I could have sworn upon oath last night that he’d have been spared to us many a day to come. But ’tis ever the way, sir. Them as is worth the plucking dies first, and such as be not worth a penny lasts till kingdom come.’

The governor swore a deep oath.

‘There goes a good slice of my income,’ he said, resentfully. ‘Sir William Denham is soft as to the heart and heavy as to the purse. I doubt Mr. Wharncliffe will never know how

well his friends have lined my pockets. Do they know of his death?’

‘Ay, sir; and they wish him to be brought away for burial, an you will permit.’

‘Why, confound them! they are welcome to the corpse! An they like to save us the trouble of putting it in the earth, so much the better. Give me living bodies to grow rich on, not dead ones. I’ll have a look at the corpse to-morrow; it is too late now. I cannot be delayed.’

Scroop went away well satisfied. All promised well; he was not afraid for the result. He went about all day talking to his brother-jailers of the good source of income which he had lost. He jested about the garnish which he had received from Hugo. He paid up a bet which he had made on the previous night of ten to one on Hugo’s recovery. And thus the day passed—a day of suspense to all the parties concerned, and to the prisoner almost unendurable. At length the daylight faded, and as darkness once more fell upon the gloomy little room he knew that the crisis of his fate drew near. By and by there were steps without, and the key turned in the lock. He lay motionless on the bed with closed eyes. Supposing it should not be Scroop? He trembled, and knew that he trembled; it was no easy thing to enact death. Some one came and bent over him, then broke into a laugh.

‘Corpses must lie still, young gentleman,’ exclaimed Scroop, in a low voice. ‘An you tremble like that, you’ll make the very coffin shake.’

Hugo sat up with a gasp of relief.

‘You gave me a terrible fright,’ he said, breathlessly. ‘Ah, it is come then!’

He looked with rapture at the grim, black coffin which was to prove his salvation. Scroop went into silent convulsions of laughter.

‘’Tis not often one of your sort is so welcome!’ he exclaimed, apostrophising the coffin with a little patronising caress. ‘Sounds as if there was plenty of room, doesn’t it?’ as the hollow lid resounded to his flippant pat. ‘Well, sir, in with you. The sooner the better, for your friends wait at the gate.’

Hugo grasped the jailer’s rough hand, thanking him fervently for all he had done for him, but Scroop cut his farewells short, and, brushing a tear from his eye, once more bade him make no more delay.

Then, with a slight shiver, Hugo lay down in the narrow coffin; Scroop, at his request, laid the three books beside him,

disposed the woollen shroud so that it should not cover his mouth, and then closed the lid. Hugo gasped for breath. There were air-holes purposely pierced for him. He knew that he should not be suffocated, but yet the darkness and closeness were terrible. Then came the screwing down of the lid, a horrible grating sound close to his head; it was ghastly! It came again at his feet, and again on either side of him: the process seemed endless. At length came a pause. Scroop threw down his implements on the floor, and, unlocking the door, went out. Hugo guessed that he had gone to summon the bearers. He began to grow calmer; all seemed going so smoothly. Surely now there was nothing to fear!

All at once his heart began to beat wildly, to thump against his breast so violently that he thought it must be audible all over the cell. For steps had drawn near, footsteps too light for Scroop's heavy shuffling tread.

'The devil! what have we here? Why, nailed up already!'

It was the voice of the governor of Newgate, and through the air-holes Hugo could see that a light was held close to his coffin. There was a terrible pause. Would the fellow hear the beating of his heart? Could he keep rigidly still when he was in such an agony of fright? There came the tramp of feet in the corridor. All his friends were coming, Rupert, Jeremiah, Ducasse, and Sir William's old butler. What would happen to them, he wondered, should the trick be discovered? The governor stepped to the door.

'Why, how now, Scroop, nailed the young fellow up already! I said I should come and look at him on the morrow.'

''Tis true, your honour,' said Scroop, humbly. 'But Sir William Denham sent his men, and begged the body to-night, and as they'd brought the coffin, I thought they might as well take the body and free the room, which your honour remembers is a valuable one.'

'Well, well, 'tis no great matter. Where are his irons? He wore them an I mistake not.'

'But a light pair, your honour, and truth to tell, in the haste of the moment, I forgot to file them off. But the corpse is not laid out, and no doubt Sir William's servant will restore the shackles, since they must open the coffin.'

'A pest on your laziness! open the coffin now and take them off here. Don't you know the shackles are the property of the jail? I've lost enough in Mr. Wharncliffe, and will not lose the fetters with him into the bargain.'

Scroop, in a terrible fright, went to get a file; he saw that

he had made a fearful mistake, he cursed his folly. Why had he not said that he had taken the irons off? Why had he not thought of this before? Were all his plans to be baffled? Was Hugo to be condemned to perpetual imprisonment for the sake of a pair of shackles? He was so paralysed by this unforeseen occurrence that his wits forsook him; he could think of no fresh plan. In dogged despair he brought a file, and then slowly began to unscrew the lid of the coffin.

Again that horrible grating sound. Hugo lay still in silent agony; his only hope now was in his being able to feign death. The last screw was at length removed, the lid was raised, a rush of fresh air and red light greeted him as he lay there with closed eyes, the voices which before had sounded thick and muffled now beat loud and clear upon his ears.

Scroop, seizing the light, placed it at the foot of the coffin and began to file away with all his might at the shackles, Hugo letting his leg lie limply in his hold, and relieved to feel that his face must be in shadow. The governor glanced at him.

‘He was a pretty fellow enough,’ he remarked. ‘I reckon some maid will have a sore heart for him. That fair Mistress Denham loved him, I dare swear. How now, Scroop, burying his books with him?’

‘I thought mayhap his friends would like to have them, sir,’ said the jailer.

‘But belike I should care to have them. You are over-partial to this young gentleman and his friends, and would rob me of my dues.’

He stooped and took up the *Republic* of Plato, hastily glancing through the contents. As he did so the oak-leaf which Algernon Sydney had placed in the book on that spring day in Penshurst Park, fluttered out from between the pages and fell exactly on Hugo’s mouth. He knew what it must be, he could feel the leaf gently moving with every breath he drew; in another instant the governor must notice it.

That was the last straw! he had endured much, but this was too much for him. He fainted away.

‘Well, well,’ said the governor, ‘he seems to have but a dry library. I care not for it. His friends are welcome to such books as those.’

He placed them in the coffin, and bent down for a last look at the corpse, removing the oak-leaf from its face. As he did so, his hand came into contact with the cheek,—he drew back with a shudder.

‘He was too hot last night, and, i’ faith! now he’s too cold by half!’ he remarked, with an uneasy laugh. He felt vaguely sorry for the young life cut off; he wished the prisoner had lived longer and had put more golden guineas into his pockets.

When Hugo came to himself, all was dark once more, dark and close. He gasped for breath, and involuntarily raised his hand, groping in the darkness. His fingers speedily came into contact with the coffin lid, and this recalled to him all that had passed. Had he indeed betrayed himself? had the governor seen that he breathed? The oak-leaf was no longer on his mouth—that was certain; the lid was screwed down again, that also was certain. But what if the governor had insisted on his being buried in the prison graveyard? What if Scroop, to save himself, should really allow him to be buried alive? The cold sweat rose on his forehead at the thought; it was all he could do not to scream aloud, to shout to all the world that he was alive, when he felt his coffin raised, raised staggeringly on men’s shoulders, to be borne—whither?

The horrible, swaying motion, the lurching first to one side, then to the other, as he was lifted up, made him turn faint once more. When he again came to himself, he was being borne swiftly along, and he could distinguish that they were in the street, for there were sounds of horses’ hoofs, sounds of wheels, sounds of many feet and many voices. A fresh terror seized him. What if the governor had insisted on sending his corpse to his brother instead of to the Denhams? That would be worst of all, worse even than the prospect of being buried alive. He tried to make out in what direction he was being carried, but in vain, and it was not until he heard Jeremiah’s unmistakable cough echoing sepulchrally beneath him that he began to feel reassured. Jerry he knew would die rather than take him to Randolph.

And then hope rose again for him, an ecstasy of hope, and he laughed to himself with silent delight as he heard the sweet, shrill voice of a girl chanting the familiar street cry—

‘Here are fine golden pippins, who’ll buy them, who’ll buy?’

Nobody in London sells better than I. Who’ll buy them, who’ll buy?’

It took him back to Mondisfield, to that first day when little Evelyn had run after him with the king-pippins. That was in reality only eighteen months ago, but it seemed to him more like eighteen years. And then once more the rapture of the thought that this was the first stage of his journey to Joyce overpowered all else; he could not definitely think, he

could only silently enjoy, feeding on that one consciousness. Suddenly a little additional shaking, and a motion of the coffin which made him feel giddy. He knew that his bearers had taken a turn to the left; they must have turned down Norfolk Street. Soon after a pause, more shaking, while one of the bearers knocked at a door, then muffled voices, and again he was borne on into the house, and deposited jarringly on a table. How soon would they release him? he wondered. Not just yet, not till such of the household who were not to be admitted to the secret had gone to bed. The waiting seemed long. At length he heard anxious voices saying that all was safe.

‘Indeed you ought to delay no longer, sir,’ said old Thomas. ‘For the young gentleman was in a swoon when we closed the lid, and who knows if he be recovered?’

Hugo raised his hand and beat on the lid to reassure them. Denham laughed.

‘Ay, ay, we hear you,’ he said. ‘Come, Thomas, be quick and unscrew him; he longs for his resurrection.’

For the second time the lid was lifted; Hugo, dazzled and exhausted, sat up, flung aside the shroud, and looked about him. There stood his deliverers, the four bearers very weary with their exertions, for they had carried him a long distance. Sir William with tears of happiness in his eyes, Lady Denham with her motherly greeting, and Mary standing in the background, pale and trembling, but yet, as his eyes met hers, coming forward to greet him with outstretched hand and smiling face.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

SUSPENSE.

O dear life! when shall it be
That mine eyes thine eyes shall see,
And in them thy mind discover?
Whether absence have had force
Thy remembrance to divorce
From the image of thy lover.—SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

THERE were a thousand things to be discussed and arranged, and first, as Ducasse was preparing to leave, Hugo drew him aside and spoke with him about his master; then, when the

French valet had gone home all aglow with the thanks and rewards he had received, Sir William set forth his plan for the next stage of their journey.

'Tis too late for you to pass the City gates without being too narrowly observed,' he said; 'therefore we think it will be best if you stay here till early morning, when you and Rupert shall ride forth together, and reach Bishop-Stortford before dark, lie there that night, and push on to Mondisfield next day. What think you of that?'

'You think the delay is not dangerous?' asked Hugo, who only longed to set off that minute.

'Nay, I see not what danger can befall you now. Your brother is not like to get news of your death until to-morrow, and by the time he comes here you will be far away, and the coffin safely buried.'

'Where is he to be buried?' asked Rupert, laughing.

'In our family grave,' said Sir William, who had not undertaken to rescue Hugo without carefully planning all the details of the escape. 'I have already asked young Mr. Sacheverell to read the service to-morrow at noon, and by the bye, Thomas, it might be as well if you now fetched in the earth. Go help him, Rupert; the box stands in my laboratory.'

Hugo was delighted to help in the filling up of his coffin, and when, for the last time, the lid had been screwed down, they removed it into an adjoining room, and Thomas brought in supper, for which they were all quite ready. It was arranged that Jeremiah should hire two post-horses, and meet Rupert and Hugo in a quiet back street hard by. Here they would mount unseen, and ride off in the early morning before the town was astir. Jeremiah would proceed to Harwich later in the day, after attending the funeral, and Sir William would be fully prepared to receive any remonstrances from Randolph by reminding him that, as he had disowned his brother in life, it was not to be supposed that he would care for him in death.

All seemed to promise well. Surely now they were secure—surely now they might rest on their oars—might relax the strained anxiety of the last two days.

And so, when the old serving-man had gone away, and when Thomas had gone to bed, they drew together over the fire, and talked in low voices of all that had happened during Hugo's long imprisonment, and discussed his future, and spoke of Mondisfield, of Colonel Wharncliffe,—even of Joyce. It was not, however, until Hugo was left for a few minutes alone

with Mary that he could speak freely of that which was so near his heart; he felt so secure of her sympathy,—and surely this alone was sufficient to give the lie to those words the governor of Newgate had let fall about her? Those words had made Hugo vaguely uncomfortable; he remembered the change that had imperceptibly come over their friendship after he had told her of Joyce; he remembered now little details of that night at Gray's Inn—details which had conveyed nothing to him at the time, but which now returned to him, and filled him with compunction. Mary's voice startled him out of these thoughts.

'There is one confession I have to make to you,' she said, colouring a little. 'When you were recovered from your illness in February, I wrote and told fair Mistress Joyce that it was well with you. I meant to tell you before that I had written. Will you forgive me?'

'Why did you write?' asked Hugo, more and more perplexed.

'I could not bear her to be unhappy, and from your letter she must have been prepared to think of you as dead or dying. I could not see why she need be robbed of all hope. Was I too bold to write? Are you angry with me?'

'God bless you for it!' he said, taking her hand in his. 'You may have saved her much. Oh, Mary, you are our hope-bringer; you brought hope to me in my prison, and you sent it to my dear love in her sorrow.'

At that he choked, and could not say another word. Was there naught left for her, he wondered? Had she brought hope to them, and was she to be left desolate? For he could not but perceive now that there was truth in the governor's words, though aware that Mary's love was of a type which would have been incomprehensible to the speaker. Even he himself could not realise that her spiritual love gave her real joy in his joy. He felt troubled for her,—she divined his thoughts.

'Do not speak as if I were some martyr, giving all and taking nothing,' she said, lightly; for so only was it possible to touch on such a subject. 'Believe me, Hugo, I have had my share of happiness in what you call the hope-bringing. Why, I brought hope to myself into the bargain,—the hope of saving you, of knowing you would be on your way to Joyce ere another sun goes down. 'Twas the happiest notion ever came to me in a theatre, that of your rescue. I hope you are properly grateful to Mr. Shakespere, Mr. Killigrew, Mr. Betterton, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and all the actors and actresses who may lay claim to having a finger in this pie.'

'I am grateful to none of them, save you. It was your doing.'

'That is enough to content the soul of any woman,' she said, laughingly, yet with a deeper meaning beneath the words which she intended him to gather. 'I shall have to hand down so brave a compliment as that to Rupert's children and grand-children, that they may properly respect their kinswoman who rescued a prisoner from Newgate. I did but set the ball a-rolling. Others have had the carrying out, which was far harder.'

'I cannot yet take it in,' said Hugo, looking dreamily round the familiar room, which seemed so large and luxurious after his prison quarters. 'I have dreamed it so often, that I half fear to wake now and find it all unreal.'

'Have you thought of your future?' asked Mary. 'Shall you stay long at Mondisfield?'

'No, that would scarce be wise with such a neighbour as Sir Peregrine Blake. I shall but stay there for a day or two, and then rejoin Jeremiah at Harwich, and make all speed to Amsterdam. They say that is the haven of all exiles now, since the town gallantly refuses to give up refugees.'

And then they drifted back to talking of Joyce, and after a time Lady Denham returned with provisions for the journey; and so in preparations and many last words the time passed swiftly by, till at last the dawn broke, and Sir William went to rouse Rupert, who, as the surest way to keep him sober, had been induced to go to bed.

Hugo longed for the start, and yet dreaded it. He dreaded saying good-bye to the Denhams. How good they had been to him! How true and loyal in their friendship! How unlike the rest of the world! They guessed his feeling, and made the parting as cheerful as possible, Rupert as usual jesting and teasing, Sir William and Lady Denham full of kind, hospitable cares, Mary saying little, but holding the spaniel in her arms and keeping him quiet, that he might not disturb the household.

'If I could only think I should see you all again!' said Hugo, huskily, when the farewells had been said.

'Why, don't lose heart now, of all times,' said Rupert, cheerfully. 'You'll be coming here ere long, and bringing your bride with you, I dare swear.'

They were in the entrance-hall. Hugo involuntarily glanced at Mary. She smiled—a smile of perfect sympathy, and seeing that he turned impulsively, again caught her hand in his, and

kissed it ; then, without another word, followed Rupert out into the grey morning twilight.

All was very still, not a creature stirred in the silent streets. The two did not say much ; there was somehow a solemn feeling about that journey which they had begun. Turning a corner, they came in sight of Jeremiah holding the two horses in readiness for them. They mounted in haste, and rode away with scarcely a word, for all had been arranged with the old serving-man beforehand. He watched them out of sight, then returned to the Denhams' house, ostensibly to watch beside the coffin, but in reality to collect such things as his young master would need to take into exile with him.

Meanwhile Denham and Hugo passed through Temple Bar, upon which, among the rows of heads, was set a ghastly-looking quarter, but newly added to the grim collection.

'Yonder is part of the last victim to the Plot,' said Denham, pointing up with his riding-whip. ''Twas Sir Thomas Armstrong, who made the mistake of flying to Leyden instead of to Amsterdam, and, being brought back, was hanged and quartered a few days since.'

Hugo shuddered.

'I heard St. Sepulchre's bell toll,' he said. 'But they did not tell me who it was for.'

The news saddened him, and made him apprehensive ; he did not breathe freely till they had left the city behind them, passed out through Bishopsgate, and gained the free, open country. Then the rapture of escape and the consciousness of comparative safety overpowered all other thoughts, and his spirits rose to the highest pitch. How beautiful was this country road along which he had last ridden a handcuffed prisoner, how green the grass was, how wide the great blue expanse of sky. Accustomed to the blank, white walls of a cell, he was almost intoxicated by the mere delight of colour, the rich brown earth freshly ploughed, the red brick of the cottages, the fresh, spring green of the trees, the golden glory of buttercups and celandines. He was like one who, returning from a long sea-voyage, greets the earth anew, comes to it once more as to a fresh paradise. He could have laughed with delight at the mere sight of the green fields, flat Essex fields though they were ; the sun just rising threw its level beams over the wide landscape, the fresh morning air made mere breathing a pleasure, he was free once more, free and on his way to his love—what wonder that the dark past fled from him like a dream of the night.

After a while, hungry with their early ride, they drew rein and paused beside a field-gate to do justice to Lady Denham's provisions, while their horses cropped the grass by the roadside. A flock of sheep were feeding in the level, green pasturage. Hugo watched them with a sort of fascination, the white, woolly creatures had never seemed beautiful to him before, but to-day he could not look long enough at them ; even the cracked sheep-bell was musical, the baaing and bleating of the lambs was more delicious to his ears than the finest concert.

Then on once more through the green lanes and flowery banks, past hamlet and village, waste land and town, until at length in the evening they reached Bishop-Stortford, and, avoiding the inn at which he had slept when brought there as a prisoner, made their way to a smaller hostelry.

Then they both began to feel that the escape had tired them. They supped at once and made all speed to bed, nor troubled themselves at all with thoughts of pursuit or discovery, but slept all night with never a dream to disturb their peace. All had gone on smoothly, why should they fear now ? Surely all risk was over ?

'Fresh as a daisy,' was Rupert's greeting, when Hugo came down the next morning. 'Your lady-love will scarce believe your dismal tales of Newgate dungeons, an you go to her looking like that.'

'Have you ordered the horses ?' asked Hugo, eagerly, only longing to start without delay.

'Ay, ay, they will be here anon, but, odds fish, man, you would not have us go on empty stomachs ! Come, sit down and make a good meal, here is trout such as I'll warrant you have not tasted in jail.'

They were sitting in the inn parlour, a comfortable, wainscoted room, with the ceiling supported by oaken beams, and the window gay with spring flowers. They were very merry over their breakfast ; Denham told his latest stories, and they laughed over them as they had never had the heart to laugh when he had visited his friend in Newgate. For atmosphere makes a great difference, and what atmosphere could be more exhilarating than that of the cosy parlour at Bishop-Stortford on the morning on which Hugo was to return to Mondisfield !

'And so,' concluded Rupert, 'as the king played at Pall Mall in the park, there came to him at the most ill-convenient of times one who brought him news——' He broke off abruptly, for Hugo had turned ashy pale, and had grasped his arm.

‘Hush!’ he cried, ‘for God’s sake listen.’

Denham, much alarmed, held his breath. Some one was coming down the stairs, and talking meanwhile to the servant.

‘A pest on your foolish pate—did I not bid you have breakfast ready for me long ere this? Let it be served forthwith, you lazy varlet. What’s that? What do you say?’

The voice was not to be mistaken, Rupert knew that without doubt it was the voice of Randolph Wharncliffe. He was confounded. In all his life he had never known such a horrible moment. Not dreaming of pursuit they had walked into a trap, had by ill-luck actually thrown themselves into Randolph’s arms.

But long training in adversity had taught Hugo wisdom. A year before he would have lost his head, would infallibly have been taken as he was at the table. He had not lived through those months of misery for nothing. Quick as lightning he sprang forward; in one glance he had taken in the whole of the room, and, before Denham had time to wonder what he was about to do, had sought the sole shelter the place afforded. By the side of the hearth was a cupboard; he flung open the door, glanced in, saw that amid faggots, mops, tallowdips, and rush-lights was just room for him to hide, and without a moment’s hesitation sprang in. Denham, darting forward, locked the door upon him and put the key in his pocket; then, with an agility which would have made any spectator laugh, rushed back to his place at the table, and, when the door of the parlour opened, had his face well buried in a huge tankard of ale.

As he drank he thought,—he was not good at forming schemes on the spur of the moment, but now his desperation and determination that come what might he must save his friend, stimulated him to unwonted exertion. As an actor he was in his element, and, the plan once formed, he might be trusted to carry it through with credit.

‘First-rate home-brewed, that!’ he remarked, setting down the tankard, and stooping to wipe his mouth on the table-cloth.

‘What, Denham!’ exclaimed Randolph Wharncliffe, who had come into the room, and was looking discontentedly at the table, which showed no preparation for his breakfast.

Then he remembered that since his conduct to Hugo the Denhams had had nothing to say to him, and he turned away with an oath, vexed that he had been startled into a greeting which would not be returned.

‘I did not think to meet you here,’ said Denham in a grave

voice. The voice was so unlike his own that Randolph turned and looked at him. Rupert was paler than usual, his face was sterner.

‘I am on my way to Newmarket,’ said Randolph, surprised that his first remark should have called forth any response. Then, with an uneasy attempt at jovial carelessness, ‘And, by the bye, now I think of it, I am in your debt. Do you remember the supper we had a year last October in that country inn?’

‘Ay,’ said Denham, gravely. ‘I remember.’

‘An I recollect aright, you took twenty to one that Hugo would never succeed at court. Well, I own myself beaten. Hugo hath failed miserably, hath defeated all my hopes.’

‘Ay, he hath defeated them in a way you little reckoned on,’ said Denham, with an angry flash in his dark eyes. ‘Sir, I must speak plainly with you. I did not think to meet you here, but I am the bearer of a message which perchance will not be wholly welcome to your ears.’

‘Do not trouble yourself to deliver messages from Hugo. Have I not told you that I have disowned him? He is naught to me. Quit the subject, sir, at once. I will hearken to no message from him.’

‘You will never have to hearken to words of his again,’ said Denham, looking him full in the face. ‘I am the bearer of a message to you, but not from him. My father thought you ought to be informed that your brother is dead.’

‘Dead!’ exclaimed Randolph, incredulously.

‘Dead,’ repeated Denham, in his coldest voice. ‘But really, sir, it can be a matter of little interest to you, seeing that you have ceased to regard him as one of your kith and kin.’

Randolph made no reply, but fell back in the nearest chair. His face had become livid. Rupert continued, rather cruelly,

‘I suppose his death disconcerts your plans. “Dead men tell no tales,” as the proverb hath it. In this case dead men can unfortunately not give evidence. An you wished your brother to do that, you should not have left him to pine away his life in Newgate.’

Randolph made no reply, but feeling Denham’s reproachful gaze intolerable, he bent forward and hid his face in his hands.

There was a knock at the door. Denham, thinking it came from the cupboard, started violently. The servant entered, set down a pile of plates on the table, and then, to Denham’s dismay, crossed the room and tried to open the cupboard door.

‘Don’t loiter about in here,’ he said, sharply. ‘Get what you want elsewhere; this gentleman does not wish to be disturbed; he hath private affairs to discuss with me.’

‘Your pardon, sir, ’tis but a faggot I want from the cupboard; but drat the door, I do declare it must be bewitched.’

‘Damn you and the faggots too!’ said Rupert, wrathfully. ‘Get you gone, and fetch your firing from elsewhere. Can you not see that this gentleman wishes to be alone?’

The servant glanced at the bowed figure, and with a shrug of the shoulders left the room. Denham breathed more freely. But the danger was by no means past. Randolph raised a haggard face when the door had closed behind the servant.

‘How did he die?’ he asked, hoarsely.

‘He had had one of his ague-fits the day before, and next morning Scroop, the jailer, went into his cell and found him cold as a stone. The only wonder is that he hath survived so much.’

‘Curse their folly!’ said Randolph, bitterly. ‘They told me he was better—they told me he got daily stronger. They told me he was well lodged and well fed, and that you did all that was permitted for his comfort.’

‘That was true enough,’ said Rupert. ‘We did what we could—and for Newgate he was not ill lodged. But you know what this winter hath been. Three prisoners died before him in the same room. Was Hugo such a Hercules that he should live when all others perished? You know well enough that his strength never was anything to boast of. Why, even old Busby had to temper his floggings when Hugo was in question. You should have taken a leaf out of his book.’

To his surprise, Randolph’s hard face began to work convulsively. Again he bowed his head. There was silence in the room, broken only by the strong man’s sobs.

In the meantime, from his hiding-place Hugo had watched the whole scene. Tremblingly he had seen Randolph’s entrance, had listened for Rupert’s first words, upon which so much would hang.

It was long months since he had last seen his brother; he watched him intently, and instinctively knew that the change in his expression was a change for the worse. But yet the sight of him moved him greatly—moved him so much that he forgot his fear, forgot the terrible risk he ran, forgot that everything depended on the interview which he was watching. It was so strange to be thus an unseen spectator that he really felt as though he were dead,—as if Rupert’s words were strictly true,

He listened with the strangest feeling to the account of his own illness and death; he watched Randolph's face with interest and sympathy, even with a sort of joy. After all, his brother had not then in reality disowned him. He had uttered the cold words, but in his heart had all the time cared for him. He grieved for him now—grieved for him, not for the defeat of his own plans; that was cruel of Rupert to suggest such a thing,—Randolph's face gave the lie to any idea of that kind. When he saw him bow his head to hide his grief from Denham's stern gaze, it was all he could do not to make his presence known. How could he let his brother suffer thus? How could he let him live all his life long with this weight on his conscience? It was intolerable. He must reveal himself, must put an end to this ghastly farce.

At that moment the entrance of the servant had scattered all his thoughts to the winds. He suddenly realised what discovery would mean. It would mean terrible danger to all who had befriended him, it would mean risk to Colonel Wharncliffe, it would mean an end to all hopes of seeing Joyce. For Randolph would never forgive the deception that had been practised upon him.

Panic seized Hugo as the servant shook and rattled the cupboard door; his breath came fast and hard, great drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. The servant left the room, but there was no knowing that he would not return, there was no knowing that Randolph's suspicion might not be awakened by so strange a circumstance as a cupboard door which would not open and a traveller who had left his breakfast half eaten. Through the keyhole he could see all with terrible distinctness: the chair which he had lately occupied pushed back, the unfinished plate of fish, the fragment of a manchet; Randolph sitting opposite all this, unobservant as yet, his face hidden by the long, curled wig which drooped low on the table; Denham glaring across at him, anxiety, fear, perplexity, all contending for the mastery in his face,—for, as his enemy's head was bowed for an instant, he had ceased to be an actor, was simply the embarrassed friend, scheming in vain to get this dangerous man off the premises. Hugo watched it all as if he had been watching a scene at the play; the sunshine crept in through the lattice window and lit up Randolph's grey doublet and crimson baldric, gleamed too on the hilt of his sword. Every detail was keenly noted by the silent watcher. He even noticed the silver-handled riding-whip with the same heavy leathern thong which he had good reason to remember. How

handsome Denham looked too with his merry face grave and stern, with anxious thought in the usually careless eyes !

Once more a servant entered, this time a comely girl in red petticoat, grey cloth waistcoat, grey linsey-wolsey apron, scarlet neckerchief knotted in front, and snowy cap. She too had a try at the cupboard door. By this time Hugo had grown philosophic, had schooled himself into quiet, almost into indifference. The girl gave it up, and, going to the table, began to clear a place for Randolph.

‘You have finished, sir ?’ she said, turning to Denham.

‘Ay, clear the decks,’ he said, carelessly.

‘The other young gentleman, sir, hath he done ?’

‘Ay, he has done too.’

Randolph looked up.

‘You are not alone, then ?’ he asked, glancing across the table.

‘Yes, I am alone,’ said Denham, coolly. ‘But, as ill-luck would have it, I fell in with an old acquaintance on the road, and he chose to put up at this inn, which, in truth, is not so good an one as the other lower down. He was on his way to Newmarket, but I need accompany him no further on the road, for now that I have found you I shall return to London.’

‘I will go with you,’ said Randolph, raising a tankard of ale to his lips with a hand which visibly trembled. ‘I must attend my brother’s funeral.’

‘Then if we mean to do that we must lose no time,’ said Denham. ‘I rode off in haste, but there was a rumour in the house that the funeral would have to take place speedily. Unless we start off at once I doubt we shall be too late.’

‘I am ready to follow you,’ said Randolph. ‘I have no stomach for breakfast after your ill news. Denham, before God I swear that I never dreamed imprisonment could harm a hair of his head. I meant him but to stay there till he yielded.’

Denham looked him in the face.

‘Then you might have known that you were dooming him to stay there all his life,’ he said, sternly. ‘How should such as Hugo yield to you ? How should light be conquered by darkness ? But come, we waste time, let us have the horses round and be off at once. If I speak plainly you must pardon me ; a man does not lightly lose a friend like Hugo.’

Before long the horses were ready, the bills paid, the servants fed. All was quiet in the inn-parlour. Randolph had already mounted. Hugo in his cupboard could hear the horses

pawing impatiently. He wondered much what would happen to him—how he was to be released! Denham's loud voice penetrated to his still retreat.

'Ay,' he said, 'I am ready at last. Oh, bide a bit, though. Where the devil is my tobacco-pouch? I must have left it in the parlour. Ride on, an you will; I will overtake you.'

The horses' hoofs were plainly heard without. Randolph must indeed have started. Then came quick footsteps in the passage, and Denham rushed into the room, unlocked the door in a trice, and dragged out his friend.

'Safe!' he gasped. 'Make all speed to Mondisfield, and fly the country as soon as may be. Things may leak out; do not linger.'

Then, before Hugo could speak one word of thanks, before he could even bid him farewell, he was off once more, and the next minute Hugo saw him pass the window on his horse, making all the haste he could to rejoin Randolph.

Hugo locked the cupboard, dropped the key at a little distance, then called boldly for his bill, ordered his horse to be brought to the door, packed his saddle-bags, and in another quarter of an hour had left Bishop-Stortford behind him, and was on his way to Mondisfield.

At first, thoughts of Randolph disturbed his peace, but soon all faded save the consciousness that he was on his way to Joyce, that ere the sun went down her sorrow would be ended, that in a few hours' time he should once more clasp her to his heart, tell her how he had kept his promise, and had come back as she had bidden him. He was tired, desperately tired, for the strain of the last few days had been great, and the long ride was exhausting, spite of the hope which kept him up. Yet how different was the pain and weariness from that which he had endured on the summer day when he had last ridden along that road. His heart danced within him as he galloped on, past the wayside cottages, through the village where the children had given him the water, over the heathy plain, till at length the cross-roads were reached, and he knew that there was but a mile to Mondisfield.

The horse began to show symptoms of fatigue, for he had had a hard journey, and but little rest; and as to the rider, he was so worn out that he could hardly keep his seat. He bent low over the horse's neck, too weary to sit upright, and yet, spite of all, his heart was bounding with happiness. Had he not been so physically exhausted, he would have sung aloud for very gladness. They were going at a foot pace, for the

ground sloped a little, when all at once they came to the old black barn by the road-side. Hugo's heart gave a great throb of joy as he caught sight of it. Then slowly they rounded the corner, and came into sight of the three elm-trees at the gate of Mondisfield Park.

'My God!' he exclaimed. 'My God!'

Griffith might have been shocked, yet the ejaculation was but the natural outburst of a heart filled to overflowing with long-deferred joy.

For on the grassy mound at the foot of the trees sat Joyce. Joyce, with her light curls gently stirred by the wind, with her sweet face gravely bent over a hatful of primroses, which she was sorting and tying in bunches. Very sweet, but very wistful, did she look. He had time to note the change in her ere she looked up, indeed he was close to her before she became aware of the horse's hoofs on the road, and raised her eyes to see whether by chance it might be the post with a letter from her father.

Ah, what was this? She saw him, she recognised him, but yet made no movement towards him, uttered no cry of joy, smiled no smile of relief; but, rising to her feet, stood, with wide-open eyes and blanched face, clutching at one of the trees as though to support herself. She was not glad to see him; she was terrified. Oh, what had happened? There surely could be but one thing which would make her fear to meet him.

He was conscious of a sharp stab of pain at his heart, then of a wild, blind impulse which made him throw himself from his horse and rush towards her.

'Joyce!' he cried, 'Joyce! my love! my love!'

She shrank back, trembling, white, terrified. It was more than he could endure; with a low cry he fell forward—fell on the grass at her feet.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

UNDER THE APPLE-TREES.

Wept they had, alas the while !
But now tears themselves did smile,
While their eyes, by love directed,
Interchangeably reflected. —SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

IN those days, at any rate in those remote country districts, the belief in ghosts was much more prevalent than in the nineteenth century. Joyce, looking up from her primroses on that spring afternoon, and seeing before her what she took to be a white phantom horse, with the wraith of her lover, shrank back in unconquerable dread. Her heart beat so fast that it nearly stifled her, she stared in dread fascination at that spectral figure, which was Hugo, and yet which was not Hugo, for the face was pale and transparent, the eyes shone strangely, he looked altogether unearthly.

It was now five months since the tidings of his death had reached her, the news-letter which contradicted this intelligence had been lost in one of the winter storms, Mary's letter had shared the same fate, it was impossible that she could think this sudden return anything but an apparition from the other world, or an hallucination of the brain.

The rapture in her lover's face, the radiant joy depicted there, his changed voice, his altered form, all tended to confirm her mistake; strangely enough it was not until she saw that look of joy replaced by one of agony that she began to doubt, —not until she saw him fall to the ground at her feet that she was suddenly convinced that this was Hugo in the flesh, no dread visitant from another world, but her own lover, wearied with a long journey, worn with illness and imprisonment.

She burst into tears, and, hurrying forward, managed to turn his face to the light, hoping that the fresh spring wind would revive him: she chafed his cold hands, she called to him, broken-hearted to think what pain she must unwittingly have given him,—how cruel a welcome had been his.

And so presently, amid rushing and booming in his ears as once more he struggled back to life, Hugo became aware of a sweet voice broken with sobs. How piteous and yet how delicious it was! he could not stir, he dreaded breaking that magic spell.

‘Hugo! Hugo!’ she cried. ‘Dear love! Sweetheart! How cold, how hateful I must have seemed to you! Oh, how could I think it your wraith? Yet they told me you were dead, Hugo. Ah, you stir, you sigh! Dear love, speak to me—speak!’

Kneeling beside him on the grass, she rained tears and kisses on his face; he opened his eyes; was it only the vision that had so often come to him in Newgate, of Joyce kneeling beside him in the copse by the Suffolk road-side on the day of the duel? He looked at the sweet, tear-stained face, and knew how different the vision was, for now she was his own—all his own! At the thought new life, new strength took possession of him. He sprang up, wroth with himself for having alarmed her. She had thought him dead, and his sudden return was almost enough to kill her. At the thought he was once again all strength and manly tenderness.

‘My dear one, did they send you false tidings of my death?’ he cried. ‘Had I but known I would have written, would not for the world have broken on you thus suddenly.’

She wanted no explanation, it was enough for her to feel his arms round her, enough to know that he was alive, free and once more at Mondisfield.

There was a timeless pause, into which no fears or cares obtruded themselves, all but love and joy were crowded out; the two so long parted had each other once more, and were unconscious of aught else in the world. It was the white horse which at length startled Joyce into some recollection of place.

They were close to the public road; a vague instinct of danger came to trouble her perfect peace.

‘Dear one,’ she said, ‘are you safe from pursuit?’

‘I cannot tell for how long,’ he said, with a sigh. ‘But at present I am safe. For the next day or two I may remain here, if your father will permit me.’

‘My father is abroad, at Amsterdam. You must come and let my mother bid you welcome,’ said Joyce. ‘Do not let us linger so near the road, it may be prudent to keep your visit from the village folk.’

‘You are right,’ he said, anxiety once more returning to him. And yet there was a certain sweetness in feeling that she shared in the anxiety, there was bliss in seeing how already she thought for him, planned for him. He led in the white horse, which all this time had been dining comfortably on the long grass by the wayside, and Joyce walked beside

him up the drive till they came in sight of the dear old house, with its brown-tiled roof, its salmon-pink front, its familiar windows. He told her some of the details of his escape, and then they conferred together as to the best way of making his presence known to Mrs. Wharncliffe. In the end, Joyce persuaded him to let her run on quickly to the house, while he left his horse in the stable-yard. He could hardly bear to let her go out of his sight, but she was afraid the sudden shock might be bad for her mother, and, remembering how her father had bid her on that last night to be in all things her mother's helper, she could not even now let her happiness make her careless.

They were all of them country girls, could ride, run, and swim to perfection ; but Joyce had never run so fast as on that day ; her cheeks were glowing, her eyes beaming with joy, when she threw open the door of the south parlour. Mrs. Wharncliffe could only look at her in mute astonishment.

'Mother dear,' said Joyce, kneeling beside her, and trying to speak calmly, 'there is no fresh news from father, but yet good news has come to-day to Mondisfield.'

'Has the post been here?' asked Mrs. Wharncliffe.

'Not the post,' said Joyce. 'Much better than a mere letter. Oh, mother darling, it was all a mistake ; the newspaper did but publish a false rumour about Hugo. He is alive, he is free, he is here!'

Waiting only for her mother's close embrace, scarcely hearing her words of surprise and delight, Joyce flew away, for her quick ear had detected steps upon the gravel outside. In another minute she returned ; Mrs. Wharncliffe had risen to meet them, but paused, thinking perhaps it were well that her welcome of Hugo should be in the south parlour rather than at the front door. Once more the door was opened ; she saw her little girl flushed, eager, radiant with happiness, and beside her, holding her hand, walked Hugo. She gave him a mother's greeting, then drew back a step, looking at him with a long, searching look. It was Hugo, yet not Hugo. Her feeling was, after all, not unlike Joyce's when she had first caught sight of him. The dreamy, philosophic youth, the boy who had yielded to that dread temptation in the gallery, the lad who had afterwards so nearly succumbed to his brother's will when Colonel Wharncliffe lay in hiding, was no more. Not a year had passed since that dread summer day, but the time had been long enough with Hugo. He looked many years older ; he had come back to Mondisfield a man. The

broad forehead and the quiet eyes were as pure as ever, but shone with a light that was new and strange; the loyalty which had once belonged solely to Randolph had deepened and widened. He was no longer the blind tool of another, but the devoted love, the noble constancy, had been turned into its true course.

It is ever those who are willing to lose their life that shall verily find it; and that which was true and good, even though misdirected in the old life, shall be truer and better in the new. For man's life is like a stream; pain and trial are but the dams which drive back the water to its rightful channel — and that which was pure and sparkling on its way to the black morass is pure and bright and a thousandfold stronger when, turned in its course, it joins the river and is borne on seawards.

‘Hugo,’ said Mrs. Wharncliffe, with a smile, after the first greetings and questions were over, ‘will you blame me if I treat you now at once as my son? In truth I was in sore need of one to help me, for in three days’ time we are to leave this place and to rejoin my husband.’

‘You are to go to Holland!’ exclaimed Hugo, with delight. ‘Then you will let me travel with you, and serve you so far as I am able. I do not think my brother is likely to insist on exhuming my body, and in no other way is the truth likely to be betrayed, therefore I do not think my presence could in any way endanger you.’

‘In truth you will be the greatest comfort,’ said Mrs. Wharncliffe, ‘for you know the world and the ways of travelling, whereas I for many years have never been further than to St. Edmondsbury in my own coach. But come! we must not keep you here talking of the future, I will show you to the guest-chamber, and you, little Joyce, run and bid them bring in supper speedily. Hugo must be hungry after his long ride.’

Hugo changed his dusty travelling dress for one of the fresh suits which the Denhams had prepared for him. He took great pleasure in donning clothes which had never seen the inside of Newgate, and the mere consciousness that he was once more in a free, open, country house was in itself exquisite. How pure and sweet the old guest-chamber seemed to him, how fresh the wainscoted walls, the chintz curtains, the white bed in its deep recess. And about all was that indescribable smell of the country which, ever noticeable to town-bred folk, was doubly delicious to Hugo after his long imprisonment. It

made him think of the scene in the House Beautiful, which he knew almost by heart from constant reading:—‘The pilgrim they laid in a large, upper chamber, whose window opened towards the sun-rising; the name of the chamber was Peace.’

Presently in the country stillness he caught the sounds of a child’s merry voice, and knew that it must be little Evelyn. Going down the broad oak staircase he made his way to the hall, but, before any painful recollections could return to him, his thoughts were altogether diverted by the eager welcome which he received from every one of his cousins. They could not make enough of him, the joy of his return from what they had deemed the grave overpowered their natural shyness. Taken up with the anxiety to do honour to the man who had saved their father, they forgot themselves, forgot to wonder whether he would think them rustic and countrified, forgot to be afraid of the courtly London gentleman, even when most conscious how different he was from the bluff, country squires around. It was worth all that Hugo had been through to sit at that cheerful supper-table in the old hall with those happy faces beaming on him, with Joyce by his side, with the mother at the head of the table, anxious and careworn, but yet with such deep relief on her brow.

Later on Mrs. Wharncliffe sat with him in the north parlour, and he gave her a more detailed account of his imprisonment than he had cared to give before the rest of the family. Then when her questions had all been answered, and there came a momentary pause in the conversation, he raised his quiet grey eyes to her face with the question which he had been longing to put to her ever since his arrival.

‘Joyce has told you of our love, madam,’ he began, steadily, his voice with some difficulty. ‘Your welcome makes me hope that you will not wholly forbid my suit. Will you pardon me for having spoken to her ere asking your consent? I thought I should never see her again—I was carried away—I could not keep silence.’

‘I will not say that I did not regret it at first,’ said Mrs. Wharncliffe, smiling. ‘I deemed Joyce over young. But I do not blame you for speaking that day—I well understand that you could not bear to leave the place without telling her.’

‘Yes, it was that,’ said Hugo, eagerly. ‘The going away for ever as I thought and never telling her that ’twas love of her that made it sweet, that ’twas love of her that gave me strength to resist.’

‘And are you still sure of your own mind?’ asked Mrs. Wharncliffe. ‘You have seen much of the world, you have doubtless met many women more brilliant than my little country maid. Are you quite sure that you do well, in all seriousness, to ask her to be your wife?’

‘Of that I could never doubt,’ he said, eagerly. ‘My only doubt is whether I am fit for her. I can never forget how in this house I was once a treacherous guest, how all this misery hath been wrought by me.’

Looking at him Mrs. Wharncliffe saw that it was not alone the illness and the hardships of Newgate which had made him so many years older. Men do not repent as Hugo had repented, and yet bear no traces of the agony. There was something reverential in her manner as she kissed his forehead.

‘My dear son,’ she said, ‘did you deem yourself wholly fit, perhaps I might hesitate. But methinks you have learnt in these months that which to my mind makes all the pain and misery worth while. Right gladly shall I entrust to you my little maid.’

So the next morning, when Joyce went out with her basket of grain to feed the pigeons, Hugo strolled out into the pleasaunce. The turf felt like velvet beneath his feet, the thick box hedge, with its sweet, indescribable smell, brought back to his remembrance the grassy walks in the garden at Penshurst; but that morning even sorrow was sweet, he could think of his friend as at peace, working perhaps in some larger sphere and safe for ever from his enemies. Musing thus he passed the willow arbour and the sun-dial, and made his way along the grassy apple-walk.

Presently a whirr of wings made him look through the trees to the red-tiled pigeon-cote. There was a sudden dispersion, for the pigeons had had their breakfast, and Joyce with her empty basket appeared at the end of the walk. She wore a white linen gown with large puffed sleeves, and in her waist-band she had fastened a little bunch of primroses; her sunny hair was hidden by a blue French hood, all but the curls which invariably strayed over her rounded forehead. She saw him and smiled, and the beautiful colour rose in her cheeks.

As he watched her framed in that sweet vista of green grass and over-arching trees laden with pink and white blossom, he knew that for him there could be in the whole world no fairer sight. They met without a word, with only one long, silent embrace. Then he put her gently from him, much as

he had done on the summer day in the north parlour when recollections of Randolph had broken in upon that momentary bliss.

‘Will you spare me a little time,’ he asked, ‘now that the pigeons are fed? There is much that I would fain say to you.’

‘Then say it here,’ she said, smiling, ‘for this is the place of all others I love best.’

They sat down on the grassy bank by the side of the moat, but Hugo’s words did not come readily. For the first time Joyce felt a little afraid of him. Half shyly she took the primroses from her band and fastened them to his doublet, then made as though she would have taken them away again.

‘Do you take back your gifts?’ he asked, smiling.

‘No, but you shall have other flowers, violets, anemones, but not primroses. They make me think of the time beneath the elms when I did not know you. Dear love! I shall never forgive myself that cold greeting. I shall ever hate the sight of primroses.’

‘Nay, hate them not,’ he said, quietly. ‘And, in truth, they meet my case right well. Do you know, my heart, the lines which the poet Carew wrote on the primrose?’

Joyce did not know them; the only poets she knew were Milton and Shakespere. She listened intently while her lover repeated the sweet old poem:

“ ‘Ask me why I send you here
This firstling of the infant year;
Ask me why I send to you
This primrose all bepearled with dew;
I straight will whisper in your ears,
The sweets of love are washed with tears.
Ask me why this flower doth show
So yellow green, and sickly too;
Ask me why the stalk is weak
And bending, yet it doth not break;
I must tell you these discover
What doubts and fears are in a lover.” ’

‘’Tis beautiful; but what have you to do with doubts and fears?’ said Joyce. ‘You may lay aside all fear of pursuit for to-day, at least. And the doubts and fears of a lover! Why, Hugo, you can never have those. Have I ever given you cause to be troubled with those?’

There was such a heavenly light in her eyes raised to his, such exquisite tenderness in the dimpled face, with its tiny mouth and rounded cheeks, that it was all Hugo could do not to fold her once more in that close embrace.

‘Dear love,’ he said, after a silence, ‘there is no need to tell you that you have all my heart,—that I have loved you ever since our first meeting. But it is but fitting that you should once more gravely consider whether you do well to give yourself to me. Remember that you are now free—free as ever—for my letter writ in Newgate unloosed you from any promise you made before. Your mother gives me leave to speak to you thus openly,—will you listen?’

‘Why would you wish me to?’ asked Joyce, looking frightened.

‘For your own sake, my heart. Because I cannot bear to think that in a hasty moment, or from a generous impulse, or perchance from some false notion that I had done aught for your father, you should give me the rich treasure of your love, and hereafter live to repent it.’

She put her hand before his lips.

‘I will not let you say such things!’ she exclaimed, with mingled indignation and tenderness.

‘Nay, hear me out,’ he said, kissing her fingers as he drew them down. ‘You must dismiss from your mind all the sweet charity, all the tender excuses you have hitherto made for me; you must consider whether you are in very truth willing to be the wife of a man who was once guilty of a grave crime,—whether you are willing to share with him exile, and perchance disgrace. My dear one, my dear one, how can I bear the thought of this for you? You who ought to have the bravest, the most unsullied heart in exchange! Oh, Joyce, love is not all joy; it is pain—bitter pain!’

‘Yes,’ she said, in a choked voice, ‘that is true; but the pain is not all on your side, Hugo.’

‘Then think it calmly over, as I would have you do,’ he cried. ‘Tell me, an you will, that I had better go hence. You shall never be sacrificed to some impulse of pity, some wish to spare me suffering.’

‘Do you think that to send you hence would make me happier?’ she asked. ‘When “I am myself my own fever and pain,” as you sang last night. Oh, Hugo, when will you understand that I love you? Methinks the pain of love is the pain of one’s own unworthiness.’

‘Make me pure as your own sweet self!’ he cried.

But she silenced him with a kiss. And thus, by the side of the moat, and under shelter of the apple-blossom, they sealed their betrothal.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

What? I! I love! I sue! I seek a wife!
Love's Labour's Lost.

LATE that afternoon, Damaris and Robina, returning from a farewell visit to one of the neighbours, and emerging from the ash-walk, were surprised and alarmed to see a stranger riding through the park. He reined in his horse at sight of them, pausing by the second gate, which opened on to the bridge. Damaris was a brave girl, but she was very much frightened, for she thought the stranger might have come in search of Hugo. She even feared it might be Randolph himself. On nearer view, however, she was reassured as to this last terror, but her manner was cold and distant as she offered to open the gate for the new-comer. Rather to her dismay, he hastily dismounted.

‘Do not dream of troubling yourself,’ he said, with more show of gallantry than she liked. ‘In truth, I did but pause to ask you whether this is indeed Mondisfield Hall.’

‘Ay, sir,’ she replied coldly, ‘this is Mondisfield. But my father is absent.’

‘So I am informed, but my errand is not with him, but with Mr. Hugo Wharnccliffe.’ The stranger smiled.

Damaris trembled. Her worst fears were confirmed. Hugo’s escape had then been discovered, and this gentleman—in all probability a constable in disguise—had come to bear him back to jail.

‘Mr. Hugo Wharnccliffe?’ she asked, doubtfully, gaining time for thought, and also deferring the evil day.

‘Ay, Hugo Wharnccliffe. He is here, is he not?’

‘Who can have told you that he is here?’ exclaimed Damaris. ‘Mr. Hugo Wharnccliffe hath been in jail these many months, and we are but lately informed that his remains were to be buried by Sir William Denham in one of the City churches. Which church was it to be, Robina?’

‘St. Mary’s,’ said Robina, briskly. ‘No, it was not though, an I mistake not, the messenger said ’twas to be in St. Clement Danes.’

The stranger laughed uncontrollably.

‘Ay, ay, his London remains were interred with pomp and solemnity at noon yesterday. But the best part of him escaped, and should ere now have arrived here. Fair maiden, you are very slow to trust me! And in good time here comes my friend to vindicate my character.’

At that moment Hugo and Joyce came through the doorway in the red brick wall, leading from the kitchen garden to the bowling-green. Damaris turned pale, and in her anxiety looked so lovely that Denham hastened to reassure her.

‘Do not be afraid!’ he cried. ‘I am his friend.’ Then, as she still looked troubled and perplexed, he hurried forward, cursing his folly.

‘Come, Hugo!’ he cried. ‘Vindicate my honour,—and tell your fair kinswoman that I was one of those who bore you from Newgate. I’ faith! she takes me for a constable in disguise—for a wolf in sheep’s clothing—for a foe to be baffled and silenced and scouted.’

The two young men greeted each other warmly, and then followed the series of introductions, to each of which Denham replied by a sweeping bow which amused the country girls and made them slightly apprehensive about their curtsies.

‘And will you pardon me for having affrighted you?’ he asked, turning with one of his humorous looks to Damaris.

‘You should have spoken out plainly at once, sir,’ said Damaris, with severity.

Denham made a gesture of mock despair and turned from her to his friend.

‘Tell Mistress Damaris that I henceforth forswear the sin of frivolity and idle jesting!’ he exclaimed. ‘But, odds fish! my dear boy, how could I help but continue in a strain which served so excellently to draw forth her wit and her beauty?’ Then, as they were out of earshot, ‘Egad, Hugo, you have surely made a mistake betwixt those sisters!’

Hugo laughed.

‘I am glad you think so!’ he replied, merrily. ‘Go in and win.’

“‘I love my love with a D,’” quoted Denham, “‘because she’s delightful. I hate her with a D because she’s disdainful.’” Then, leaving Hugo and rejoining the group on the bridge—‘Fair Mistress Damaris, I beg a thousand pardons for having caused you any uneasiness. An I crave your pardon on my bended knees, will you let bygones be bygones?’

‘Come,’ said Hugo, laughing, ‘we will take your horse

to the stable, and Robina will apprise Mrs. Wharncliffe of your arrival.'

So he and Joyce went away with the steed, and Rupert and Damaris were left alone on the bridge to make the peace as best they could. Denham was enraptured with her fresh healthful beauty, and charmed with her downright honesty and quiet self-possession. She was unlike any girl he had seen before. The Puritan household, too, impressed him not a little—it was all so novel; and though he had to walk warily, Damaris made up for the sense of restraint.

'I'm dog-tired, Hugo!' he exclaimed, when at night he and his friend found themselves alone together; 'I have walked delicately like Agag, I have been soft and pliable as a sucking-pig, a turtle-dove, a Puritan of Puritans. Never an oath this whole blessed day,—and yet,'—here he relieved himself by a few strong expletives—'yet the fair Damaris frowns on me—treats me as a reprobate. 'Tis hard! 'tis cruel hard!'

'Come out to Holland, and woo her,' said Hugo. 'She would make you a right good wife.'

Denham made a comical grimace.

'Nay, matrimony is too solemn for me. 'Twould depress me; 'tis too grave a risk for one of my temperament.'

'Very well, then, leave Mondisfield at once. An you trifle with one of my kinswomen, I'll never forgive you, Denham, not though I owe you my freedom and my happiness. For, look you, these are country girls, and—thank heaven!—they are unused to gallantry and court manners. An you go on making love to Mistress Damaris, she will take you at your word and perchance you'll break her heart for her.'

'Heaven forfend!' said Denham, devoutly. 'But yet the holy state of matrimony, Hugo, is a thought which terrifies me. Where would be the freedom I had of yore, the days with the scourers, the——'

'They would be in the past, and a good thing too,' said Hugo, promptly.

'But,' hesitated Denham, with a comical dismay in his face, 'but d—— it all, Hugo, I fear she's a tongue!'

'Ay, and one that'll keep yours in order, I warrant,' said Hugo, laughing. 'I'll dance at your wedding, Denham,—it's no use your kicking against Fate. Mark my words, you'll be a Benedick ere many moons have waned. But come, a truce to this nonsense. Tell me more of Randolph. Did he suspect naught?'

'Naught. We rode from Bishop-Stortford to London grave

as mutes at a funeral, though, luckily for me, at a rattling pace. Then, solemnly alighting at my father's house, we made all speed to see your remains, which of course had been buried that morning.'

'What said Randolph?'

'He was closeted with my father for some time, but I heard not precisely what passed betwixt them. Only my father told me afterwards that he seemed like one crushed beneath a heavy load; that he assured him again and again that he had never ceased to care for you, and had fully meant, after a time, to procure your release.'

Hugo sighed. It pained him terribly to be obliged to allow his brother to believe in his death.

'Do you think it will never be safe to tell him?' he asked, wistfully.

'Why, man alive! no!' cried Denham, aghast at the notion. 'Twould bring half a score of people into trouble, and would undo us all. He would be so mad with rage at being duped, that he would kill you, would challenge the rest of us, would ruin Scroop, and stir up the very devil.'

Hugo was fain to acquiesce in the truth of this speech. But the thought of his brother cast a dark shadow over his sunny future.

CHAPTER XL.

JOYCE'S JOURNAL.

If we be two, we two are so,
 As stiff twin-compasses are two;
 Thy soul, the first foot, makes no show
 To move, but does if the other do.
 And though thine is the centre sit,
 Yet when my other far doth roam,
 Thine leans and harkens after it,
 And grows erect as mine comes home.
 Such thou must be to me, who must
 Like the other foot obliquely run;
 Thy firmness makes my circle just,
 And me to end where I begun.—DR. DONNE.

So after all, my journal ends not in grief but in rejoicing; not in thoughts of Hugo's death, but in the glad news of his return. For right skilfully his friends rescued him from jail,

making as though he were dead, and then, free and safe once more, he made his way from London to Mondisfield, reaching us one glad spring day towards sundown.

My dear love is changed. He is much more beautiful; he hath suffered so much that all say he looks more like a man of thirty than one not yet of age. He has grown terribly thin, and his brow seems broader, and his cheeks more hollow, and his lips straighter and more spare. When I first saw him, he seemed all eyes, so worn and wasted was he with pain and fatigue. But there is much more change in him than this change that I chronicle in his features. Only it is more hard to put into words. I suppose there is nothing like solitude for teaching us that we are not solitary,—nothing like weakness for making us realise what strength may be ours. It seems to me that Newgate hath done this for Hugo. He went away a brave youth, showing his repentance in deeds rather than in words. He hath come back a God-like man. What hath passed in the interval, no one will ever know. And that methinks is as it should be, since our Lord said men were to be known by their fruits, not by chattering to all the world about the precise time and manner in which the sap came to their branch. And the using this simile reminds me of some words which Hugo let fall to-day. I was saying to him as we walked among the woods, how, even in my sorrow, it had made me happy to see the trees coming to life again and growing green after the long cold winter.

‘Ay,’ he said, ‘yet they were coming to life long before you saw any signs of it. ’Tis in mid-winter that the sap begins to rise, when the plants and trees have had a rest, and when, having been forced for a time to be inactive, they are ready and longing for more work.’

‘I never thought the things grew in the winter,’ I said.

‘Trees and men,’ he replied, smiling. ‘’Tis no bad thing to be for a time bereft of all outward things. As good Mr. Herbert saith,

“O foolish man, where are thine eyes?
How hast thou lost them in a crowd of cares?”’

And then he told me a little about his former life in London, of how he had rushed from one study to another, or from one pleasure to another, of how happy his full free life had been until all at once he found himself plunged into Newgate with neither books nor friends, and knew that his happiness had all

depended on such outward things. And then, he said, when that worst time of all came, and he was cast into a horrible dungeon, the thought of Mr. Francis Bampffield, with whom he had lived the previous month, kept returning to him.

'I had not hearkened much to his sermons and discussions,' he said, 'for such things never had much attraction for me, but I thought of his face, which, spite of all his sufferings, was the cheerfullest you ever saw.'

And so one thing and another helped him, till he learned not to chafe at the misery and loneliness—and I fancy it must have been in that dungeon that he became what he now is. Not that he said anything about it in direct words, but when I asked him many questions as to what the dungeon was like and so forth, and then shuddered at his description of the cold and damp and filth—though I knew he kept back the worst details from me—then he said that he would not have me sickened by the thought of his hardships, which might be put into words, while the comfort he had had never could be told. And a most beautiful look came into his eyes as he said that, spite of the wretchedness, which he allowed had been very great, some of the happiest moments of his life had been spent there.

I hope I shall not 'lose my eyes in a crowd of cares,' but indeed there is so much on hand just now, such a rare stir and bustle and excitement in our usually quiet life, that it is a little hard to make time to think. However, I shall try, else I can never be fit to be Hugo's wife.

What with packing and tidying, putting the house in order, laying by the china, and making preparations for the journey, the days seem very full, and then there is Rupert Denham in the house, who contriveth to waste much of our time, which, however, we cannot grudge him, when we remember all that he hath done for us. I like him, he is so merry and full of fun, and so devoted to Hugo. I said to him to-day that they seemed more like brothers than friends; and at that he grew quite grave all in a minute, and said, in a low voice—

'Fair Mistress Joyce, do you think there is indeed any chance that we may one day be brothers indeed?'

Which speech put me to the blush; for I saw at once what he meant—since no one can help but know that he greatly admires our Damaris. And, since the descendants will perhaps wish to know the end of this love tale as well as of mine, I shall take the journal with me and finish it in Holland.

Amsterdam, September 1684.

At last I can find time to write, and must indeed make all speed to do so before the freshness of things passes from my mind. And yet I do not think anything that has passed this happy time will fade away from my memory. The leaving Mondisfield was sad, but yet I could not but feel that we should return some day, and that helped to lessen the pain of leaving. We all set out at dawn on one cold April morning, wishing to make as much progress that day as possible, my mother and we five elder ones inside the coach, and little Evelyn behind with Nurse and Tabitha, while Hugo and Rupert rode on in front, coming now and again to the window to ask how we fared. How slowly the old family coach rumbled along! And as we got further from home, and especially when the twilight began to gather, my mother looked so anxious and nervous that even we girls began to tremble and to remember all the horrible tales we had heard of highwaymen.

Just in the darkest part of the road, when great beech-trees overshadowed us on every side, and my heart began to quake, my dear love rode up to the coach side, and though it was awkward for him to guide his horse in so narrow a way, rode alongside of us till we were out of the wood, talking so briskly all the time of other matters that we forgot our fear, and indeed were quite merry by the time we reached the town of Hadleigh, where we lay that night.

It made me very happy to see how my mother leant upon Hugo, how she left the management of all to him. There was something about him that always won respect and liking from strangers, though his manner was so quiet that one would have thought he would have attracted no notice. But, however it was, it always came about that where Rupert's orders were often saucily received or perhaps neglected, ostlers, servants, landlords and all waited on Hugo's slightest word.

And what care he took of us all the journey! I shall always love to think of it. The second day was bright and sunshiny as the first. We set off again early in the morning, Rupert still continuing with us, since he said he must see us safely on board the vessel at Harwich. He looked very doleful at the prospect of the parting, and all that day kept gathering posies for Damaris and handing them in at the window with so tragic an air that I could have found it in my heart to laugh had I not felt rather sorry for him, since Damaris received all his offerings with an unconcerned air that

would have tried the patience of Job—at least, if he had been in love it would.

Hugo brought flowers for the rest of us, having no coy lady-love to propitiate with offerings. To my mother he brought violets, to Betty cowslips, to Frances primroses, to Robina—who scorned anything so feminine as flowers—an enormous dandelion which made every one laugh, and to me a lovely handful of bluebells and delicate white starwort, fringed round with fern-leaves.

At noon we paused to bait the horses and to dine. I noticed then that Hugo looked very weary, but he made light of it, and, leaving Rupert to wait upon Damaris, hastened into the inn to give the orders, and to see that everything was made comfortable for us. But when we sat down to dine he excused himself, and lay back on the wooden settle in the corner, looking so ill that I was terrified, and ere long he fell into one of his shivering fits, and we knew he was attacked once more by the ague.

What a talking and confusion arose when it was discovered! Every one suggested some different remedy or plan. Rupert declared it was impossible to proceed, and that we must pass the night at the inn, which methinks was as much with a view to himself as his friend; Nurse talked of herb tea and hot blankets, while the landlady declared that a perfect cure for the ague was to sit with the legs in a deep churn full of hot milk, and to sip *carduus posset*.

I shall never forget Hugo's face when he heard this remedy proposed. He got up, wrapped his cloak around him, took up his hat, and ordered the horses to be brought round. Then, when the landlady was out of earshot, he said to my mother,

'You do not remember that I am wholly unused to luxuries of this sort. I cannot hear of hindering you on your journey.'

My mother was much perplexed, but, knowing that there might be some risk to Hugo himself if we lingered any longer in England, she allowed him to have his way, only insisting that he must come inside the coach, and let one of us girls ride. He was loth to do this, but in the end was forced to consent; and so it fell about, to Rupert's great content, that a pillion was put upon his horse, and that Damaris had to ride to Harwich behind him, while Hugo's horse, laden with such gear as we could fasten to the empty saddle, trotted behind the coach. I think no one regretted the change; I know I was glad enough of it, while Rupert became as merry as a grig,

and even Damaris relented a little, and showed him more kindness than she had hitherto done.

And so all that afternoon we lumbered along slowly enough through the country lanes and roads, Hugo very silent, and, I fear, suffering much, though he never complained. Once, when my mother lamented that we had not more warm wraps with us, he said, with a smile, that the cushioned seat of a coach was Paradise when compared with the damp stones of a dungeon, and, pressing my hand closely, that he wanted for nothing. Still, though he made light of all the discomforts, I did feel very glad when the lights of Harwich shone out in the distance, and when at length we drove up the street and halted at the door of an inn.

As Rupert passed us, I saw that an old man walked beside his horse and talked with him; then, as the coach stopped, he hurried forward, and even in the dim light I recognised at once, from Hugo's description of him, that this must be his dear old servant Jeremiah. He was evidently much distressed to see his master's plight, but he said scarce anything about it, from which I gather that, knowing my dear love well, he has learnt his ways, and knows that Hugo dislikes of all things any stir, bustle, or fuss.

'When doth the next ship sail for Amsterdam?' asked Hugo, leaning forward with flushed face and glittering eyes.

'To-morrow morning, master,' said the old servant.

Hugo looked much relieved on hearing this, and allowed himself to be taken into the inn without more delay, leaning hard on Jeremiah's arm, and leaving Rupert to see to our comfort, which I must say he did with the utmost zeal.

I was so glad to have the right to nurse Hugo. The landlady at the inn, a very kindly body, made me a cup of hot posset for him, and I carried it up to his chamber, where Jeremiah received me somewhat doubtfully, till Hugo, catching sight of his face, introduced me to him as his future mistress, whereupon the old man nearly made me cry with his pretty speeches. He is a dear old Puritan fellow, and was enchanted that his master meant to take to wife one of the right sort, as he expressed it. I only wish I were as good as he seems to think me. He left us at length with the remark that I bid fair to be as handy a nurse as Mistress Mary Denham, and a Puritan to boot, which he made bold to say was a great advantage.

'Why doth he not approve of Mistress Denham?' I asked. 'She did more for you than I have done, or can hope to do.'

'Jeremiah likes her well,' replied Hugo, 'but disapproves of her gay dresses, of her dancing, theatre-going, and so forth.'

'Yet she is very good?' I asked.

'Yes,' he replied. 'I have good reason to know that.'

And then he told me sundry things about Mary Denham which I shall not set down here, only they made me feel towards her as to no other woman on earth, and that evening I wrote her a letter, which Rupert promised to deliver safely into her keeping. I am grieved that the letter she wrote me should have been lost, but yet the writing hath served to prove to us her generous love, and some day, when we return to England, I hope to become acquainted with her.

My dear love was better the next morning, and able to bid a cheerful farewell to his friends and to dear old England. Poor Rupert looked blank enough—indeed, I thought we should never have got him off the ship in time. He was the very last to leave, and returned twice to kiss Damaris' hand before all the people, which made her blush crimson, yet I noticed that she forbore to scold him, for which I was glad, since he looked so miserable. I even began to think that perhaps Damaris cared for him a little bit in return—at least, she looked very grave and dismal the rest of the day; but, after all, that may have had naught to do with it, for most of the passengers began to look grave ere long, and soon the deck of the ship was deserted, and Hugo and I had it all to ourselves, for which, I fear, we were selfishly glad. How he enjoyed the sailing! I think I never knew before how some people can enjoy till I was with him; and certainly I had never before realised what imprisonment must be. The great expanse of rolling sea, the great over-arching dome of blue, the salt sea-wind, the rapid motion, were all bliss to him. The next day we were becalmed for eight or nine hours, much to the annoyance of the passengers; but Hugo and I were too happy to care, and indeed storm or calm was all one to us so long as we had each other. At length, one sunny spring afternoon, we really reached Amsterdam. I suppose the others had found the journey tedious; it had not been tedious to me, but of course I, like all the rest, was overjoyed at the thought of seeing my father again.

It had been impossible to apprise him of the exact day of our arrival, since all was so uncertain, so that in the end we took him by surprise, arriving at his lodging in the Keiser's Graft, and walking in upon him at his afternoon meal. How his face lit up at sight of us! And what a welcome we had to

be sure! The good housewife, and her daughter, and the maids, all bustling about and making much of us, and chattering in their outlandish Dutch tongue till we were well-nigh deafened. As to our trunks and other effects, they might have been left to the thieves or lost on the quay, had not Hugo looked after them all, making himself understood and obeyed somehow, and doing a large share of the fetching and carrying himself, which is a way he has, I see.

Then when the first greetings were over, my mother told my father the good news of Hugo's safety, and with that he hastened out to find him, and I, slipping my hand into his, went too. Hurrying down the broad, shallow stairs, which were washed so white one almost feared to tread on them, we came upon one who bore a large box on his shoulders. My father was passing him, taking for granted that it must be some porter, but I checked him.

'You look for Hugo, father,' I said, laughing. 'He is under this box!'

My father turned with a quick exclamation. Hugo set down his burden, and, tossing back his long hair, raised a slightly flushed face to my father's. I can never forget the look on their faces as they greeted each other. My father is, as a rule, a reserved and quiet man, but he was so much moved at sight of Hugo that his customary manner wholly deserted him.

However, I know not that I can set down all that passed betwixt them, neither can I enter into details of all that happy time. True we were in exile, but then we were together. My father was safe, my dear love alive and well, my mother happy and content. Those were sunny days for us all, and I shall ever love the dear old city, with its noble buildings, its sweet, clean houses, which so well repay the daily washings of the housewives, its streets planted on either side with stately lime-trees, and its intersecting canals with their wealth of shipping. But, truth to tell, I have no longer time for writing of journals, for there is much needlework on hand.

As soon as Hugo had grown strong again, he was eager to find some work by which he could support himself; and this was readily found for him, seeing that my father had made many acquaintances in the place. Hugo hath accepted a post as secretary to the learned Professor Ruysch, who is a professor of anatomy and botany here, and hath taken a great fancy to my love, who is precisely fitted to help him in his labours, having long been accustomed to men of science and

their ways. Professor Ruysch hath been very kind to us, and hath given Hugo a most liberal salary. He is a fine-looking man of five-and-forty, and has the most charming daughter, named Rachel, who, though she is but twenty, can paint flowers and fruit as no one else can paint them. She is already one of our greatest friends, but indeed, did I once begin to describe all the people of Amsterdam who have been kind to us, I should never have done, and since we are already preparing for two weddings, with suspicions of a third looming in the distance, I must lay down my pen and take up my needle, else Hugo will have an ill-clad wife, and Damaris set up house with unhemmed table-linen.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE 'BRILOFT.'

And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.

Twelfth Night.

A GREATER change than from the quiet Suffolk Hall to the busy foreign city can hardly be imagined. It speedily wrought a difference in the quiet country girls; they became less shy and retiring, though maintaining to the last a certain freshness and simplicity which had a great charm. In spite of Robina's protestations that they were very happy as they were, and wanted no tiresome men-folk to unsettle them, changes speedily came to the house in the Keiser's Graft. Rupert Denham lost no time in sending to Colonel Wharncliffe a formal request for the hand of his second daughter, and after some hesitation and a lengthy correspondence the father at length consented to a betrothal, his scruples being finally overcome by Hugo's argument that Rupert only wanted a good wife to make him all that could be wished.

The city was crowded with English refugees, and although Colonel Wharncliffe held aloof from the more revolutionary party among them, and would give no countenance to the scheme already beginning to be discussed of a rising in favour of the Duke of Monmouth, he was too able a man not to be

much sought after. His house was the rendezvous of the cleverest men in Amsterdam, and the marriage which Joyce had seen looming in the distance was between Betty and one of the most frequent visitors, the son of a certain Herr Oylbrook, a wealthy Dutch merchant.

Robina groaned, and voted the future brothers-in-law an intolerable nuisance ; but she helped, nevertheless, in the busy preparations of that autumn, and behaved discreetly at the double wedding which took place in December, Betty's marriage being delayed until the new year.

The festivities were over, and Hugo and Denham, having been well content to waive any ceremonies not in accord with Puritan decorum, were going home the next day from a long afternoon's skating, impatient to return to their brides, when at the door of the house in the Keiser's Graft Hugo paused.

'I ought to see Professor Ruysch,' he said. 'He may perchance need me to-morrow. I will speak with him and be with you anon.'

'Where doth he live? Is it not near the "Briloft"?'

'Yes; will you walk on with me?'

'Not I!' said Rupert, with a laugh. 'There is Damaris standing at the window, and have I not been two hours absent already! But look you, if you pass the "Briloft," as I think you do, just call for my bill. I was there two nights, and would fain bear a good character in this place as one who is never in debt.'

Hugo smiled, knowing full well that the only opinion in the city for which Denham cared two straws was the opinion of his wife. The two friends parted unconcernedly, Hugo making his way to the professor's house, and encountering the great man on his doorstep elaborately scraping his boots that the cleanly housewife might not scold him.

Spite of the care of his daughter, Professor Ruysch looked as if his clothes did not belong to him. His long wig was pushed awry, the feather in his hat was old and draggled, one end of his lace cravat was longer than the other, and there was about him an air of shabby, careless untidiness. But his face was fine; the features large and strongly marked, the mouth firm, the chin very prominent, and the broad forehead furrowed with hard thought. He greeted Hugo merrily and would not hear of his returning to work on the following day, but bade him, with a kindly smile, go home to his pretty bride, and leave the botany to take care of itself. Pleased and relieved

by this interview, Hugo made his way home again, not however forgetting Rupert's commission.

As he walked along the busy streets which were already growing dusk, with lights beginning to shine out in the windows, he wondered to himself whether any one in that great city was as happy that day as he was. He thought of his little bride, of the happy future which lay before them, of his recovered liberty, of his congenial work with Professor Ruysch, of his restored health. The associations of Amsterdam were so sweet to him, that he forgot as he walked beside the canals under the giant lime-trees, that he was after all an exile, that the people who passed by him were not his countrymen, and that for the present he was quite cut off from fulfilling Sydney's dream and serving his country.

Such thoughts were not likely to occur to him on the day after his marriage; his face was all aglow with the afternoon's skating, his heart aglow with happiness, when he crossed the street, and entered the 'Briloft,' a little impatient of anything which hindered his return to Joyce.

The 'Briloft' was a kind of tavern, the property of a very wealthy Anabaptist. He was shown up-stairs by one of the attendants, and left in a sort of hall or ante-chamber, while the servant went to procure the bill. The place was noted for its quaint devices, but Hugo had seen them before, had with Joyce admired the fountains in this upper room, and listened to the wonderful chime of 'purselan dishes,' which rung changes and tunes by clockwork. Hanging lamps here and there made the place a perfect fairyland; but he soon wearied of the glistening white foam of the fountains and the sweetness of the chimes, and, growing impatient of the delay, which in truth had been considerable, he determined to seek the attendant and remonstrate with him on his slowness. The man had disappeared into a lighted chamber at the end of the hall, and Hugo made his way to the open doorway, and walked into what was apparently a public sitting-room. The servant, however, was not there, and he was just going to retrace his steps, imagining the room to be empty, when a sound came from the further end as of a goose-quill on paper, and, glancing once more in the direction, he made out in the dim candlelight the figure of a gentleman seated at a table writing. He drew a little nearer; perchance it might be the manager making out Denham's bill, perchance it might be a guest who knew the ways of the place and could direct him; he advanced some half-dozen paces, then suddenly halted, unable to go on or to

retreat, unable to move a muscle, paralysed for the time being by the horror of the discovery he had made. For at that table, directing a folded letter, sat his brother!

'What time does the post go forth?' asked Randolph, having heard steps in the room, and taking for granted it was but one of the attendants.

There was no answer; he looked up haughtily, wroth at receiving no attention.

Hugo turned deathly pale, for in one horrible flash of perception he had realised what this meeting involved. It meant the end of his freedom, it meant separation from his wife, it meant danger to Colonel Wharncliffe, and perhaps ruin to all who had aided in his escape. But move he could not. He stood rooted to the spot, his pale features fixed, and revealing only by their haggard look the mental anguish which he endured.

Randolph looked up, then with a cry sprang to his feet. In the dusky room only a few paces from him there stood the last apparition which he would have chosen to see. He, as a disciple of Hobbes, had been wont to mock at ghost stories; but he mocked no longer, his heart beat so fast that it half choked him, he gasped for breath, clutched at the table for support. Had he not mourned over the brother whom he had practically murdered, these eight months? Had he not on that spring day hastened to view his coffin in the vault of the City church? Had he not caused a tablet to be engraved to his memory, and piled adjective upon adjective in the description of his virtues? And now suddenly in this Dutch tavern his spirit appeared to molest him. He was the more startled and horrified, because he knew that there was a reason why Hugo's ghost should seek him at this particular time; he was on the eve of a duel, and he made no doubt that his brother had appeared to warn him of his coming fate.

In an agony of fear and remorse he was seized with a yet greater fear that the spirit would go away without speaking to him.

'Hugo!' he gasped, 'Hugo, for God's sake speak to me!'

Still there was silence, but the face seemed to grow less cold and fixed; for in truth Hugo perceived from Randolph's terror that he, like Joyce on first catching sight of him, took him for a disembodied spirit. He saw one last hope of escape. Still keeping his eyes fixed on his brother he moved back a few steps.

'Stay!' cried Randolph. 'If you have any pity on me,

stay! Say at least that you pardon me. I have repented, Hugo; repented of all.'

'Repentance should be in deed rather than word,' said Hugo. To Randolph's excited fancy his voice sounded strange and hollow.

'Only tell me how I can show it in deed, and I will bless you for ever!' he cried.

'Swear,' said Hugo, 'that you will procure Colonel Wharncliffe a safe return to his estate.'

With a gesture of authority he pointed to his brother's sword, and with trembling hands Randolph drew it from its scabbard.

'I swear that I will procure Francis Wharncliffe a safe return to his possessions, and never more molest him or his, so help me God.'

The strong man's voice was weak and tremulous, his face was ashy. Even in the midst of his frightful anxiety Hugo could not help marvelling at the curious reversal in their mutual positions. That he should command Randolph, that he should assume that tone of authority, while his brother bowed submissively to his will, and even trembled before him, this was passing strange! The old spell was so entirely broken, however, that, although he knew the terrible risk he ran, although aware that the instant Randolph ceased to believe him to be merely a spirit he would assume his former bearing, he felt no dread, no self-distrust, no fear now that his brother's will would overpower his and force him into treachery against Colonel Wharncliffe. All that was in the far past, he stood now calm and intrepid, chained to the spot, not by the sudden shock of surprise and horror, but by the love for his brother which had outlasted all else.

'Tell me at least that you forgive me!' repeated Randolph. 'Do not go without one word of comfort.'

'I forgave you long ago,' he replied, quietly, while there came over his face a look which made Randolph bow his head and press his hands hard over his eyes.

'Tell me,' he said, after a pause, looking up once more—'tell me what fate awaits me on the morrow. I have called out John Southland. Is that the reason you are come? Do you warn me of death?'

Grief unspeakable expressed itself in Hugo's face; he forgot everything save that Randolph stood in mortal peril, and had called out a man who had never been known to miss his aim.

He could no longer endure this hampered intercourse, he must break through the dreary farce and declare himself.

Breathlessly Randolph watched the sudden change which came over the face of his brother; in the look of grief and distress he read his approaching fate, there was no mistaking the strong emotion which betrayed itself in the pale face, and it was with a suppressed sob that the spectral figure came hurriedly forward with outstretched hands. Randolph recoiled; but the figure still advanced, its sad eyes fixed on him haunting him in that terrible way in which they had haunted him these many months. But this was no dream, in another moment those chill hands must touch his, this death-wraith was not to be repulsed. He drew nearer and yet nearer, speaking never a word; to Randolph the moments seemed like hours, the silence of the room weighed him down with horrible oppression, the eyes which reproached him, just because they were not in themselves reproachful, seemed to strike a blow at his heart. This silence was intolerable—maddening! Human nature could endure it no longer. With a cry he fell—would have fallen to the ground had not those spectral hands laid hold of him. He was just conscious enough to be aware of this; he felt himself guided down and laid gently on the floor; an interval of dimness, then the cold hands were at his throat untying his cravat. The horror of that was too much for him—he fainted away.

And now there arose for Hugo one last struggle. Should he avail himself of this momentary unconsciousness and rush from the 'Briloft'? Should he save himself and leave his brother? Should he go back to his little wife and treat this strange scene as though it were but some nightmare? Vividly there came back to him the recollection of a very different interview in a London inn; he remembered the unspeakable misery of his return to life, the awful loneliness, the helpless looking for one from whom he had been separated for ever, the desolation that had overwhelmed him.

Could he go and leave Randolph to this? True the risk was great, but should he not venture it? While he still hesitated Randolph recovered his senses.

'Do not be afraid,' said Hugo, as once more the distressed look dawned in his brother's eyes. 'I am no death-wraith. You were mistaken; I never died at all. I am living at Amsterdam with my wife's family.'

The sentence had been quietly begun, but as he spoke those

last words his voice shook. He folded his arms, and stood silently waiting for Randolph's reply.

How would he take this revelation? Would pride and anger triumph? Or did he indeed still care for him?

Randolph stared at him for some moments without speaking; then he seized his hand as though to assure himself finally that his eyes and ears were not deceiving him.

'Flesh and blood, you see,' said Hugo, with a faint smile.

'I do not understand!' cried Randolph. 'You are here in Amsterdam, you did not die—you have a wife! How in heaven's name did you manage it all?'

Hugo drew forward a chair, and, sitting down, gave Randolph a detailed account of his escape from Newgate, of his illness on the previous night, of the scene with the governor, of how they had contrived to carry him to Sir William Denham's in a coffin, of his ride to Bishop-Stortford, and of how he had only just had time to get into hiding before Randolph came down to breakfast in the morning.

'You did but save yourself by the skin of your teeth,' said the listener, who had followed the story with breathless interest. 'Had I come upon you at table I should assuredly have been in such a heat that you would have been carried back to Newgate.'

'Yes,' said Hugo, 'I knew there was no chance for me, otherwise I could not have borne to stay there witnessing your remorse.'

'Then how, in heaven's name, is it that you do not dread revealing the truth to me now?' exclaimed Randolph.

'I do not know, for I have much more to lose.'

'Why did you not effect an escape while I lay there in the swoon?'

'I could not leave you thus, and I knew that you could only harm me, since your oath bound you to serve Colonel Wharncliffe.'

'And your wife?'

'You could not harm her, she is Colonel Wharncliffe's daughter—we were but married yesterday.'

Again his voice trembled slightly. Randolph continued, quickly,

'Do you forget that you are still a minor? Would it not harm her if I carried you off to jail again?'

Hugo's lips turned white.

'I trusted you,' he replied.

There was a pathos in those three words which could not

fail to touch even such a man as Randolph. He said nothing, but held out his hand. Hugo grasped it, and the two were reconciled.

After that Randolph breathed more freely, relapsing indeed into his usual manner, and refusing somewhat haughtily to go to the house in the Keiser's Graft.

'I will abide by my oath,' he said; 'I will never again molest Francis Wharncliffe, though I came hither to see if I could not get hold of him by hook or by crook. But he is my enemy still, and will ever be. How I have cursed him since I heard the news of your death! My one consolation lay in this, that it was in truth he who had murdered you, not I.'

Hugo thought this a curious repentance, but he said nothing. There was a pause, which he broke by asking the time of the duel.

'To-morrow at sunrise,' said Randolph. 'John Southland and I fell out at play last night.'

'Cannot you patch up your quarrel honourably without fighting?'

'No; that is out of the question.'

'Very well, then I must go out with you.'

This spontaneous offer broke down Randolph's pride; with a keen pang he remembered how he had last looked on Hugo at Whitehall, knowing that he was leaving him to go forth alone to the most horrible of punishments; he remembered, too, another duel when he had acted as Sir Peregrine Blake's second, and had spoken words which must have wounded Hugo to the quick.

'You forgive me,' he said, huskily. 'I own that I need forgiveness. If only this affair does not cost me my life, you shall see how I will make good the past to you.'

And thus, after arranging for the morrow, they parted, Hugo in the end forgetting Denham's bill, which had been the cause of his coming to the tavern. He was greatly shaken by all that he had been through; he walked the streets of Amsterdam like one in a dream, hardly knowing whether he were relieved or burdened by this interview. Joyce had been watching for him, and flew down-stairs to open the great door and welcome him, but something in his face frightened her. He caught her in his arms and kissed her passionately.

'What is it, dear heart?' she asked. 'What makes you so pale and worn? Hath Professor Ruysch quarrelled with you? What has happened?'

He did not reply till they had reached their room, then his calm gave way. The danger past, he realised how great had been the peril, how awful the anxiety, how priceless were the treasures of love, and life, and freedom. Gradually Joyce drew from him all that had happened. Long ago she had ceased to feel harshly towards Randolph ; the others might occasionally drop some word of strong dislike, or severely censure the family foe, but Joyce never. For Christ's commands are never impossible, and an enemy really prayed for becomes in time beloved.

'If he is wounded on the morrow,' she said, gently ; 'if, as you fear, it should go against him, then bring him here, Hugo.'

And Hugo promised that he would.

CHAPTER XLII.

RECONCILED.

But justice, though her dome she doe prolong,
Yet at the last she will her owne cause right.

SPENSER.

NATURALLY enough the news caused not a little perturbation in the family ; Joyce, who was more nearly concerned than the others, took it all far more quietly ; but then she was much under her husband's influence, and saw things from his point of view. Her chief anxiety was now for Randolph's safety. Hugo had gone forth at dawn looking terribly anxious, and since then Joyce had become so firmly convinced that Randolph would be brought back wounded that she had made ready a room for him, put new sheets of her own spinning upon the bed, and placed ready to hand all that she thought might be needed by the leech.

Then she stationed herself at the window to watch. It was a cold, grey winter's morning ; the church bells sounded loud and clear, but they had to-day a melancholy cadence, at least she fancied so, although but yesterday they had seemed like the faint echoes of her great joy. Two half-frozen-looking robins were flying from twig to twig of the trees opposite ; vendors of fish and fruit went by with heavy baskets hanging

from the wooden yoke round their shoulders. Bustling housewives hurried to the market, wearing great flopping hats, little round capes, and hoops in their skirts. Joyce saw this in a kind of dream, while all the time her thoughts were far away. She thought much of her husband, she recalled vividly her first sight of him, when he had tripped up Sir Peregrine Blake and freed her from his unwelcome attentions. She thought of that duel two years before, and of the great changes wrought by it. She wondered much whether this duel would be as fruitful of results.

All at once she sprang to her feet, for, looking down the street, she caught sight of a litter being borne by four men. Her husband was nowhere to be seen; she hurried down, terribly frightened, and was glad enough to encounter her old nurse on the stairs.

‘Whither away, honey?’ said the nurse, caressingly. ‘Why, what is the matter?’

‘Come!’ she cried, breathlessly. ‘Come and help, here is my husband’s brother wounded.’

She threw open the door; the bearers seemed in some doubt, but had come to a standstill.

‘Yes, yes,’ she explained, quickly, in Dutch. ‘It is all right, it is my brother-in-law—bring him in.’

As she spoke her eyes met those of the wounded man; he was past speaking, but she read in his expression that he longed to protest against being carried into this house.

‘You will not mind, you will come here for Hugo’s sake,’ she said, bending over him. The troubled, agonised look deepened, but he seemed reluctantly to assent, and the bearers took him to the chamber which Joyce had made ready.

The nurse fetched strong restoratives, and in a little time he recovered himself enough to speak.

‘Who are you?’ he asked, fixing his eyes on Joyce, and apparently forgetting that she had spoken to him as he was borne into the house.

‘I am your sister, Joyce,’ she said, quietly.

And then, because he looked so ill and miserable, and because he belonged to Hugo, she stooped down and kissed him shyly on the cheek.

He turned away with a groan.

Joyce knew his face well, it had stamped itself upon her brain on that terrible summer day in the hall at Mondisfield. But she saw now, what she had been unable to see then, that certain outlines of his face bore no little resemblance to Hugo.

The expression had been so different that she had never till now noticed it—it deepened her grief for him, and intensified her pity. She felt, as she had never deemed it possible she should feel, that he really was her brother.

A gleam of pleasure came over Hugo's troubled face, as he entered with the leech whom he had been to summon, and caught sight of his wife in her new character of sick-nurse. But he made some excuse to draw her away from the alcove.

'You must not stay while the leech is at his work,' he said.

'Already you are looking pale and tired, as though you had not breakfasted.'

'Not more so than you,' she said, tenderly. 'The duel went against him, then?'

'Yes, it was all over in less time than I can tell you of it. John Southland never yet missed his man. I knew Randolph had not a chance.'

'But the leech may cure him,' said Joyce.

'I think not,' said Hugo, sadly.

His foreboding proved to be true. The leech tortured the wounded man for an hour or so, then gave him up, and told him bluntly that there was no hope for his life. Both surgery and manners were rough in those days.

Randolph was too strong a man not to take the news calmly, he had far too much of the Wharnccliffe reserve to say one word of regret to his brother, or to utter one complaint; whatever the state of his mind, he was not likely to betray it to any living being, but Hugo took some comfort by his quick recollection, spite of his weakness and suffering, of the oath he had made on the previous night.

'Fetch hither your inkhorn,' he said, when Hugo returned from bidding the leech farewell. 'I must write at once to the king, else will you still have to remain in exile. Also I will ask him to grant a safe return to Francis Wharnccliffe.'

Hugo drew a chair to the bedside and wrote at his brother's dictation such a letter as could hardly fail to procure pardon for both of them, unless it chanced to find the king in an ill-humour. Should this happen he half feared that Scroop and the Denhams might get into trouble, and this made him suggest a new idea to Randolph.

'You see,' he began, 'it will at once be known that Sir William Denham is compromised by my escape. How would it be, think you, to send this letter to London by Rupert

Denham, and let Sir William himself if he thinks well bear it to the king, seeking a fit opportunity?’

‘Tis not an ill thought,’ said Randolph. ‘The king is fond of him, and respects him as a man of science. How comes Rupert Denham here?’

‘He is but lately married to Damaris, Colonel Wharncliffe’s second daughter.’

‘Denham married!—and to a Puritan maid! Good God! is the world coming to an end?’ said Randolph, astonished and amused.

‘There are Puritans and Puritans,’ said Hugo, smiling. ‘Also Denham is not what he once was. It would be asking a great deal of him to leave his bride and hasten to England, and yet I think he would do it.’

‘He would do it for you,’ said Randolph, with a touch of bitterness in his tone, ‘any one would do anything for you. Am not I sacrificing the wish of a lifetime, and helping my bitterest foe, for your sake? Here have I plotted and planned for years, yet in the end all my hopes are defeated by you,—I am conquered by you!’ There was an extraordinary mixture of contempt and admiration in the last word; it was as though the two sides of Randolph’s character were struggling together, and neither could obtain the mastery.

‘You are not conquered by me but by God,’ said Hugo, speaking with an effort.

‘God is out of fashion, Hobbes is all the rage,’ said Randolph, with a sarcastic smile. And after that he relapsed into silence. Hugo mused sadly over his words. He mused over Hugo’s.

The shaking signature of the wounded man was duly affixed to the letter, and that very day Denham set sail for England. He fully realised the gravity of the situation, and willingly undertook the work for his friend, knowing that there was no one else who could manage it so well. Damaris cried her heart out, but would not for the world have kept her husband back. And in fact she was not much worse off than Joyce, since Hugo scarcely left his brother night or day, and when for brief moments she did see him alone, he was sad and harassed, and preoccupied. Had she not been able to help him in nursing Randolph she would have been miserable; but luckily the sick man had no objection to her presence, and, although she did not in the least know it, she had great influence with him. He would lie for hours watching her, as she sat just outside the alcove with her needle-work; he saw

how she followed Hugo about with her eyes, how sweet was her face and how tender her voice when she spoke to him, how quietly and unobtrusively she made arrangements for him, laid cunning little plots to tempt him to rest or to eat, and allowed him to take the lion's share of the nursing, though, woman-like, she longed to have it all her own way.

He became very careful of the language he used in her presence. He admitted to himself that Hugo was right and that there were Puritans and Puritans. He remembered with keen remorse how terribly he had made Joyce suffer. He wondered much whether she had forgiven him. One day Hugo, after a long night's watching, fell asleep in his chair by the bedside, and Joyce, stealing noiselessly into the alcove, spread a fur rug over him.

'You are not ashamed to be fond of your husband,' remarked Randolph, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice. 'An you go to court on your return, you had better not show it so plainly, else you and he will be the laughing-stock of the place.'

For a minute Joyce made no reply, and, chafed by her silence, he said, bitterly,

'Ah, it is all very well now, but by and by you will find that he's not the only fine young spark; then you'll look on marriage with other eyes.'

She turned upon him with a sweet scorn not to be described in words, but perhaps realising that he was ill, and remembering how sad was the description her mother had given her of his past life, her eyes grew pitiful, and she said, with quiet dignity, as if making excuse for him,

'I see you know just nothing at all about it.'

Randolph was silent. In all his life no one had spoken to him in such a way. He flushed deeply, but not with anger or resentment. Joyce finding the silence uncomfortable, added,

'And though I do not think I would mind being made a laughing-stock of for that reason, yet I do not believe we shall be at the court more than can be helped.'

'Has Hugo spoken of your return to England?'

'Yes, once he said a few words about it, just after Rupert had sailed.'

'What did he say? What sort of a life would he lead? When I am dead, you know, he will be ~~next~~ heir to Mondisfield.'

'Yes, I know it; but he would not, I think, live at Mondisfield in my father's lifetime. He said something of

being called to the Bar, and living quietly in London; then Damaris and I shall be near each other, and I shall learn to know Mistress Mary Denham and the little Duchess of Grafton, and Mr. Evelyn and his daughter. I should like to live in London.'

'Hateful place!' said Randolph, bitterly.

'Is it hateful?' she asked, in surprise.

Something in her innocence and childlikeness softened him, he smiled a little as he looked into her clear blue eyes.

'It will not be hateful to you, my little sister,' he said, kindly; 'a place is what you yourself make it.'

Hugo stirred in his sleep; she glanced round.

'We must talk more softly. I want him to sleep, for he looks weary.'

'Yet he tells me he is stronger again, and hath had no return of the ague of late.'

'No,' she replied, 'it is true, he is better, but they say that he will always feel the effects of what he has been through. He never can be quite what he was before Newgate.'

She had so fully and freely forgiven Randolph, that she forgot at the moment that her words would convey to him any reproach.

'Joyce,' he said, taking her hand, 'Joyce, can you ever forgive me the suffering that I wrought for you both?'

Then Joyce, in her sweet unconscious way, told him how she had begun by hating him, and how her mother had first made her sorry for him, and then that, somehow—but she could not tell the manner of it—love and forgiveness had sprung up in her heart for him.

'Tell me, little sister,' he said, when she paused, 'tell me, is there aught that I can do now to please you or him? Is there aught that can make up in the slightest for the past?'

'There is one thing I should like you to do,' said Joyce, promptly. 'The leech says you might be borne into the next room. I should like you to see my father and the rest of us; I should like you to learn at last what my father is.'

Randolph frowned. She could not have suggested anything more distasteful to him; however, he would not go back from what he had said, and consented the next day to be carried into the parlour.

And thus, strangely enough, his last hours were spent in the household of his lifelong foe, and for the first time he learnt, as Hugo had learnt in the gallery at Mondisfield, the charm of that family life. After the first plunge he made no

more objections, and was carried daily into the sitting-room. He did not suffer much, but just died by inches, as is sometimes the way with strong men. Every day the leech said, 'This will certainly prove the last, the patient loses strength rapidly.'

But still he lingered on, clinging to life in a way which astonished every one.

One afternoon his strong reserve melted a little, and turning to Hugo he said,

'I had great power over you once, Hugo. I could make you do almost anything; it was just by the force of my will I could do it. You marvel, all of you, why I linger so long in this wretched plight. I will tell you—it is because I will not die. I mean to live till Denham comes back with the king's message.'

'You must not disturb yourself, even if his Majesty will not grant your request,' said Hugo; 'for see here, we are no worse off than we were before you came to Amsterdam. The city will not give us up; we are quite safe here.'

'I know it, but I would fain have you return,' said Randolph, sighing. 'You were meant to be something other than clerk to a Dutch professor.'

'If we do return,' said Hugo, musingly, 'I shall live in retirement. All public life is closed to me until the tide turns. But I think it will turn ere long. Things cannot go on as they are.'

'Which means that when his Majesty and the Duke of York have passed off the scenes, you would——'

'I should endeavour to follow in the steps of him who was martyred last year. Should try to get into parliament, should spend my life so far as might be in working for the good of the people.'

'Gallant sentiments,' said a merry voice in the doorway, 'brave words, mine Hugo, and just like yourself.'

'What, Denham!' exclaimed both the brothers, in a breath. Hugo sprang forward to meet him, the dying man half raised himself with a momentary return of strength, while the old peremptory tone came back to his voice.

'What news do you bring?' he asked, impatiently.

But he had to wait for an answer, for Damaris had heard her husband's voice, and came running in from the next room to greet him, while little Evelyn proclaimed his advent to the whole household, so that by the time Rupert and Damaris had a word to spare for outsiders, the family were all gathered together. Joyce came bringing in the lamp, every one crowded

round Denham, with eager greetings and questions, they all talked at once, there was quite a babel in the usually quiet room, while Randolph, in his distant corner, lay chafing at the delay, and marvelling how Hugo could wait so patiently beside him while uncertain what his fate was to be.

It was Joyce who remembered the invalid, and drew Denham towards the couch.

‘Come,’ she said, ‘Randolph cannot hear your tidings while we press around you thus; but it must be good news, else he would not look so merry, would he, Hugo?’ And she slipped her arm into her husband’s.

‘You saw his Majesty?’ asked Randolph, quickly.

‘Ay, ay, we saw him,’ said Denham, sobered by the great change which he, as a fresh comer, instantly noticed in the sick man. ‘My father obtained an audience, and I went in with him to tell how you all pined away in exile and longed to return. As good luck would have it, we found the king in excellent humour, and I delivered your letter into his own hands, after he had duly swallowed my father’s confession.’

‘What did he say to Sir William? Did he blame him much for having helped in my escape?’ asked Hugo.

‘No, luckily for us the story amused him, and you know you were always a favourite with him. “Confound the young rascal!” he exclaimed, when we told him how that you were alive and well, and married to boot. “Here have I been wasting prayers for his soul, deeming him in purgatory, when he was all the time enjoying himself over the water.”

‘And then he asked whether you had married the lady of the handkerchief, and said he should expect to see you both at Whitehall. So after all, sir,’ turning with a smile to Randolph, ‘there is some chance that he may make his way at court, and that in a second wager I might be the loser.’

But Hugo shook his head. Randolph did not reply, only with an air of content examined the written pardon which Denham had brought back with him. At length he looked up and said, with an air of effort,

‘And what did his Majesty say to my petition for Colonel Wharncliffe?’

Denham produced another parchment.

‘This will render Colonel Wharncliffe perfectly safe in returning to Mondisfield, no one will molest him there so long as he does not mix himself up in public matters.’

Randolph glanced at the document, then handed it to his kinsman.

‘You run no risk in returning, sir,’ he said. ‘No one bore any ill-will to you except myself: you might have been at Mondisfield now had it not been for me.’

‘All that is past and over,’ said the colonel, with grave kindness. ‘Do not let us unearth an evil which is both repented of and forgiven. And, children, let us, before separating, thank Him who has been pleased to end our exile and permit us to go home.’

Randolph looked on in much surprise; a great hush fell upon the room which just before had been so noisy; even Denham, merry, mischief-making Denham, knelt gravely with the rest of the family. An uneasy sense of loss stole over the dying man; he glanced round the wainscoted walls, the cheerful room with its blazing fire and mellow lamplight, he looked at little Evelyn, nestled up close to her mother, his eyes wandered from one to another, resting long upon Hugo and Joyce as they knelt hand in hand. What was it that he had somehow missed in life? What unknown gift did these kinsfolk of his possess which failed them neither in prosperity nor adversity?

His life was over, and he had miserably failed: he knew that he was passing into an unknown country, and he felt much as an emigrant might feel who is about to be landed on a foreign shore, with no capital, with no outfit, with no friends to greet him, and with no knowledge of the language.

And yet had he absolutely no knowledge?—did not the words which Colonel Wharnccliffe was speaking bring back to him a far-away vision of his mother? The room grew hazy and indistinct; he thought he was at home, in the old home which had been desolated in the great plague year. Was it a dream that he was young and innocent once more?

Yes, for the mist rolled away, and he was back again in the present; for years past he had mocked at ‘innocency,’ and had not taken heed to the things that were right,—how was it likely that he should have ‘peace at the last’?

A less reserved man would have groaned aloud, but Randolph was silent; no sign escaped him of that most terrible pain—the torture of realising that a life wasted—ay, and worse than wasted—is over. In his anguish he looked at his brother. Hugo would live on and leave behind him a name beloved and honoured,—Hugo would leave the world better than he found it. How hideous did his own past look as it rose before him—rose in contrast with the other’s happy future! Then, and not till then, did he realise in all its fulness the bitterness of death.

God Himself cannot give us back our lost opportunities.

So, in the 'Golden Days,' as now, were men led by suffering, by failure, by love, by life, and by death to the perception of their human weakness, their Divine strength.

Very still was the room where that final struggle raged. Very calm was the colonel's voice as he spoke the closing words of their thanksgiving.

'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.'

A second voice joined faintly in the last word. They all of them noticed it, for in that Puritan household it was not the custom : they noticed it, and remembered it afterwards with comfort.

'You will be weary after this excitement,' said Hugo, drawing near to the couch, while Joyce went to kiss and congratulate her father and mother, and Rupert and Damaris wandered off to the oriel window. 'You must rest—we will take you back to——'

But there he broke off with a stifled exclamation of grief and awe.

His brother was dead.

THE END.

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